

El Dorado

Ridgely Torrence





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EL DORADO

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A TRAGEDY

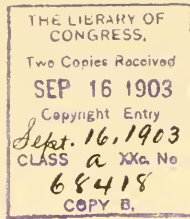
By

RIDGELY TORRENCE

*"Over the Mountains
Of the Moon,
Down the Valley of the Shadow,
Ride, boldly ride,"
The shade replied,
"If you seek for Eldorado!"*

POE

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Liberty and Justice for All

PROLOGUE

Enter SHADOW, clothed blackly, having a red dagger and bearing as a shield a great white mask.

SHADOW. Into this world where Life is born of Light
I, Shadow, have been sent to bring you peace,
To make you wise ; within my tragic themes,
Lost Love, A Sullen Will, Dead Hope and Dread
You shall find balm, pleasant with secret nard,
To heal your discontent, for all men know
That he for whom noon's brightest radiance glows
Is he who waked and shuddered at midnight.
O tear-accustomed children of this age
Look on my stage and weep no more, for now
I'll summon shapes struck with a grief so black
That earth seemed fire, the sea a cloud of fear,
Fate seemed an idiot scrawling on the sand,
And heaven driven like a little leaf.
The gold, five-keyed Elizabethan horn
Shall be for us the soothing instrument.
Then for the tale's sake I do kneel for help,
To sky-browed Æschylus who down all the years
Mourns deeply through a sterner, briefer shell,
Making men hear the eagle wheel and shriek
Round the sea rock on which all hope lay bound.
Aid thou me then, O elemental Greek,
Plunge in the rose at once her destined thorn ;
Let not the wind have gradual rise and urge,
But strike now to the tempest's coil and hiss,
Show the swift lovers burning to and fro
With Perth entombed, hearing no sound of earth
But in the sky a thunder of falling tears.

CHARACTERS

FRANCIS VASQUEZ DE COËRONADO, *Captain-General of the forces marching in search of the Seven Cities of Cibola.*

HERNAN D'ALARCON, *Admiral of the naval detachment of searchers.*

ANTONIO DE MENDOZA, *Viceroy of New Spain, i.e. Mexico.*

LUIS DE UBEDA, *A Friar.*

A GAOLER.

A WARDER.

A MAJOR-DOMO.

A CONVICT.

SIR PHILIP PERTH, *An Englishman.*

BEATRIX D'ESTRADA, *Daughter of the Treasurer of New Spain and in love with Coronado.*

SOLDIERS, SAILORS, HERALDS, TOWNSPEOPLE, COURT-
TIERS, WOMEN, FRIARS, INDIAN CAMP-FOLLOWERS.



TIME : December, 1539, to October, 1541

SCENE : First Act in Mexico. Afterward dispersedly in the
United States.

ACT I

EL DORADO

SCENE I. — *A corridor beneath the Viceregal Palace in the City of Mexico. Two thirds of the way up the stage to the left is a flight of stone steps leading up to a door through which issues a brighter light than that below. It is the morning of the day upon which the searchers for the Seven Cities leave the city. Pacing nervously back and forth is CORONADO. He is evidently fresh from an elaborate toilet and is dressed in the extreme mode of the Court of Charles V. A suit of white velvet. Over his shoulder a cloak of flame-coloured silk embroidered with gold. A white hat with sweeping plume. A very long but dainty sword with large jeweled hilt.*

On a stone bench a GAOLER is stolidly seated. He is dressed in plain leather jacket and brown hose.

CORONADO. The dawn is late!

[The sound of distant ordnance is heard.]

GAOLER. There is the gun.

COR. How strange!

This air is still grey as if charged with night.

GAOL. Our nights are like our noons.

COR. Perhaps, in prison.

GAOL. I never knew outside.

COR. But are you sure
This was the place she said?

GAOL. No man more so.
Here's what she gave me for forget-me-nots.

[*Showing purse.*]

COR. 'Tis a bleak limbo for a meeting world.

[*A woman's figure appears at the top of the stone steps. She stands for an instant. CORONADO has his face turned in that direction but does not observe her.*]

GAOL. She's here.

COR. [*Starting.*] Now go your ways. There's something real.

[*Gives him money. Exit GAOLER. CORONADO turns to meet the figure which comes swiftly down the steps toward him.*]

Beatrix!

THE WOMAN. It is you!

[*She comes to him with the evident intention of embracing him, but his manner causes her to pause at arm's length. She is pale and her dress of grey is plainly trimmed in cloth of silver with a bit of white about the neck. It is BEATRIX D'ESTRADA.*]

COR. O Wild and Dear,
This is no place for trysts!

BEATRIX. A sentinel
Was stationed at the entrance of the garden.
This was the only place.

COR. We should have waited
And gone to beg once more your father's sanction.
BEAT. To beg! And how? To pray? To kiss his
hands?

To show him seas of tears? To smile? To shriek?
Or to be quiet? I have tried them all.
Time and chance wear masks of stone to us.

COR. They seem of stone, yet blessings often come
Wearing a mask.

BEAT. And is this thing a blessing?

COR. Sweet, it may be. Patience is mine and hope.

BEAT. Patience! Patience! Are not all our days
Shrouded beneath her flinty, irksome smile?

O, Patience is the tyrant of the world!

And Hope! Why, Hope is dead! And as for blessings!

Is it a blessing to be starved, athirst,

And have both bread and wine, yet be forbade

To taste? Is it a blessed thing to dwell

Forever in a desert and behold

The gardens of the world but in mirage?

Is it a blessing to lose hope, life, love?

Well then, I pray I may be cursed, cursed, cursed,

Out of a heaven of blessings such as these

To uttermost night!

COR. It is not you that speaks!

'Tis some usurper got behind your eyes,

Seeking to take the throne where you still sit.

I know! I see you there, — calm, brave, but sad.

There is the queen no traitor ever harms!

Dear Hands with the majesty of snow and lilies,

Retake your might! Reign! Is your will not royal?

BEAT. Here is a savage. Here, within my breast,
That yields to but one man. The Church has many, —
Keep me this one.

[*The sound of a chime beating six is heard.
They start and listen.*]

COR. This hour the Council meets.
They give me my command.

BEAT. It is the end.

COR. Do not we two know well there is no ending?
Do you not dream upon this afternoon?

Go early to the Viceroy's balcony,
I will await below, and afterward,
When the last loudness fades upon the air
And the long march is dim against the sky,
I will return for one last hour of all.

Ah, do we two not well know where? The Tree!
The old, moon-smitten place of love and leaves.

BEAT. There shall be no farewell; I go with you.

COR. O madness!

BEAT. I will follow.

COR. Then would Death
Leap forth for both of us from my own sword,
For you could never come still white to me
Amid the foul camp-followers.

BEAT. We would die?

COR. By my swift hand.

BEAT. [*Desperately tearing open her garment at the
breast for him to strike.*] Now!

COR. Brave and Mad and Dear,
Only on such an hour as when you come.

Yet you will not — what wildness do we mutter, —

[*The chime beats the quarter.*]

The bell! [*He starts to go.*]

BEAT. Another death —

COR. [*Embracing her swiftly.*] No! life — and hope!

[*Exit.*]

[*BEATRIX stands gazing stonily at vacancy until
he is quite gone.*]

BEAT. Lady of Pity! Help —

[*The GAOLER comes from behind a pillar and approaches softly and cringingly.*]

GAOL.

Yestreen 'twas dim;

[*She turns.*]

So it may not have glistened to your eyes.

I have it yet.

BEAT. Have what?

GAOL.

The suit of armour.

BEAT. The suit of armour?

GAOL. [*Reminiscently.*] Yes, the prison killed him.

He gave it to me, dying, it is mine;

Called me his mother! I was far from that,

But I was very soft. Poor murdered boy!

I would have kept it, but the drink grows dear,

Dearer than memories of any man.

It is all whole, the head-piece only dinted.

BEAT. The head-piece?

GAOL.

But he always kept it down.

I never saw his face till that last day.

BEAT. Down?

GAOL.

And his face was like the upper air.

BEAT. Bring it. I will look once more.

[*The GAOLER at once produces a suit of mail from behind the pillar. He gives it to her. She holds it against her body as if measuring it.*

GAOL. Bright! Bright!

BEAT. What might I do with such a manly thing?

GAOL. [*With low cunning.*] Do? What you please.

It might have many uses.

Even more use than the poor gold I ask.

BEAT. [*Suddenly.*] Here is the gold. [*Gives him purse.*]

Muffle the suit in cloths

And in an hour carry it to the stairs.

I will be there, and with another purse

For secrecy.

GAOL. Trust me. Foam numbs the tongue.
[*Exit.*]

BEAT. [*As she goes slowly up the steps.*] And — death
— to follow — him —

And life — where else?

SCENE 2. — *Hall of State in the Palace. The room is a large one with some claim to stateliness. It is, in the main, Gothic, but alloyed with suggestions of the architecture of the edifice and ruins on the site before the restoration, fourteen years previous to this scene. The lines are more flattened and the scanty carving is seen, on closer inspection, to be alien to old-world art, unless it be Egyptian. At one end is a dais upon which is a throne canopied with red velvet and embossed with the royal arms. Upon the throne is seated the VICEROY.*

He is clad in black and on his breast is the Order of the Golden Fleece.

Upon the level of the dais, though in a movable chair, is seated a man, old, grizzled, and clad in plain soldierly dress and half mail.

At the door and lining the walls are motionless SOLDIERS on guard. Several PAGES loiter about the room, and at the end opposite the throne is a table at which are seated several FRIARS acting as secretaries.

The man seated with the VICEROY is HERNAN D'ALARCON, Admiral of the impending expedition.

ALARCON. We still need men.

MENDOZA. You have too many now.

ALAR. Yes, of one kind, but of another, no.

MEN. How?

ALAR. Of a kind of dainty officer
Fashioned of all the younger sons of Spain
That overrun this land, — pale silken things,
Or yellow, treacherous, lewd swaggerers,
We have a plenitude. But of men? No!
Of men who no more laugh at perilous things
Than they do shrink from them; grim, faithful men,
Who fight as though they work, and work like warriors, —

Of these there is a lack.

MEN. There are none left.

Even the dungeons are left tenantless.

[There is a stir at the door of the Hall. Enter a MAJOR-DOMO followed by the WARDER of the Castle bearing his keys and a book.]

MAJOR-DOMO. The Warder craves your leave to tell
a thing.

MEN. Let it be told.

WARDER. I dared not keep it back :
There is a man left, or there was, or seemed —

MEN. Be brief.

WARD. All of those lower cells are pits
Whose prisoners are only reached by chains
Let down into the dark. We dragged them forth
One after one ; I and the gaolers laughed,
They seemed so like some heavy blinking fish.
All took their freedom like a sentence, — dazed.

MEN. What of the man ?

WARD. Yes, when we reached the mouth
Of the last pit and called down the good news,
No sound came ; then said I, “ Do you still live ? ”
And listened, but the silence grew again
And we would fain have gone, when from the depths
We heard a whisper say four words, as though
Some dead man spoke a lesson to his grave.

ALAR. What were the words ?

WARD. How I remember them !
“ There is no life.” — “ Well then,” said I, “ Sir Ghost,
Yield up thy spirit, grasp the chain and mount.”
Then came the voice again, “ I have done with chains.”
And all was still ; he would not be released.

MEN. And is he yet there ?

WARD. No, we urged in vain,
Then let a ladder down and several men
Brought him, indifferent, to the air and light.

MEN. And now ?

WARD. He is within my private lodge.

MEN. Summon him here.

WARD. The book will tell his time.

[*He gives them the prisoner's record. Exit*

GAOLER.

ALAR. The book. [MENDOZA opens it. ALARCON looks on.

MEN. Cell ten.

ALAR. A lost page.

MEN. Here it is.

[*Reading.*] "*The reign of Ferdinand and Isabel —
Within the thirty-fifth year of the reign —
Imprisoned — by an order — for a crime —
A man — within the dungeons of Seville.*"

ALAR. There is a note below. 'Tis newer ink.

MEN. [*Reading.*]

"*Brought out to Mexico as galley slave —
By me — Hernando Cortéz of Medellin.*"

ALAR. The thirty-fifth! 'Tis thirty years since then!

MEN. The years drift by like rain.

Enter WARDER.

WARD. The man is here
And waits outside.

MEN. Bring him within at once.

[*Exit WARDER, who immediately re-enters leading a MAN. The WARDER steps back and the MAN is left standing at the dais steps. He has the strong, well-knit frame of a man in the prime of middle life, but his shoulders and head are inclined as with the weight of many years. His hair is white and his*

face, though full-lipped, is grey and lined with the furrows of old age. His eyes are lustreless and set straight before him. His whole demeanour betokens the most utter, listless hopelessness. He is clad in plain doublet and hose of stone-colour embellished with a gaudy cloak evidently lent to him by the WARDER.]

Who are you?

THE MAN. *Why, — not “who.”*

MEN. What does he say?

WARD. His head is still distraught.

MEN. What do you wish?

THE MAN. Wishes went last of all, but they went too.

MEN. Went where?

THE MAN. With hours — and days — and then — the night.

MEN. How long a time have you been kept imprisoned?

THE MAN. Time is a name. Yes, yes, I still hear names.

MEN. What names?

THE MAN. Dead hopes. Yes, Hope too is a name.

MEN. I can make nothing of the answers given.

Alarcon, if you wish, question the man.

ALAR. This is the Tribunal of Mexico.

You have your freedom. You have been released.

We have a kindly spirit for your grievance.

Tell us your tale that we may help your case;

This is the House of Justice.

THE MAN. What is Justice?

MEN. Impartial judgment ; equal as day and night.

THE MAN. And night — and night — and night. The tale is told.

MEN. His reason is dead.

ALAR. Not dead, but stricken hard

And mutters as a thing that looks on Death.

I have seen men once or twice before like this

When we released old prisoners of the Moors.

MEN. We can do nothing then in this event

Till his recovery, which is uncertain.

Dismissed. Lead him away.

[*The WARDER comes forward and conducts the MAN toward the door. All within the Hall have been watching the MAN, and from the secretaries' table a PRIEST has arisen and walked slowly forward. As the MAN turns toward the door this PRIEST stands confronting him.*]

THE FRIAR. O speak my name !

THE MAN. [*As to himself.*] A memory — also dead.

THE FRIAR. Philip !

THE MAN. God help me !

THE FRIAR. Hold ! Cling ! Keep your eyes Alight !

THE MAN. Ubeda !

THE FRIAR. You are still alive

That you may live ; here is the same warm, sweet,

Gold sun, green world, blue space, and blossom red.

Enter this fire-spun web of summer noon

And be enmeshed with all the willing earth !

The wonder and wine of day, the moving things.
Live for the beauty of the things remote ;
The stars, and the wise hours that make for us
The heaven-presaging briefness of a flower.

THE MAN. To live — to live — to live —

THE FRIAR. You have awakened.

Here's warmth, come near to me, grip close my hand.

Does it speak nothing of all the love that moves it?

MEN. Brother Ubeda, you have known this man?

UBEDA. I have.

MEN. What of his life?

UBEDA. 'Tis quickly told

Though long in making. In the year of grace

Nine past the flight of fifteen centuries,

An acolyte in Salamanca's cloisters

Possessed a friend like David's Jonathan,

An English knight sent thither as a student,

Whose nobleness even outshone his rank.

All sunny things smiled on him and were his

And would have lighted all his earthly life

But for a glance. . . . A noble of the town,

Decayed in fortune and merit, had one daughter

Whom he intended as a bait for gold.

The youth was but a powerless younger son.

There was a meeting and a secret marriage,

Then came the end.— The same sad moon that rose

Upon her bridal waned on her alone.

The father of the maid had certain might,

And so the bridegroom vanished like a shade.

Nothing was said. There were no questions — spoken.

This is the man. I was the acolyte.

*[The sound of clock chimes is heard outside.
Then the sound of trumpets. Enter
HERALDS trumpeting.]*

A HERALD. At this hour the Viceroy will inspect
The arsenal and weapons for the march.

*[The VICEROY rises followed by all in the hall.
They prepare to file out.]*

MEN. Sir, I have pity for your wrongs.

ALAR. And I—

MEN. We will do all we can to recompense you.

[Exeunt all except PERTH, UBEDA and WARDER.]

UBEDA. *[To WARDER.]* We wish to be left here.

WARD. When you have done

Let him come down and lodge within my quarter,—

Poor gentleman — and welcome.

UBEDA. You are thanked.

[Exit WARDER.]

Out of the lagging night of all these years

I've begged God for this hour ; to grasp this hand

And look into this face and hear this voice

And sound the name of friend for balm to you.

PERTH. Yes, I believe you have been true to me.

I give you thanks. Friends were the noblest things

In the world once, no doubt they still are so ;

I loved you then, no doubt I love you still.

And now, if you have done, I will return.

UBEDA. Will return ! Where ?

PERTH. Again into the dark.

This blatant yellow light dins in my brain.

I seem to have to bear the sky's whole arch,

Like Atlas, on my shoulders. — Yes, the dark,

The dark is better ; there I cannot see
The load I bear. — I only feel them all.

UBEDA. Feel them ! Feel what ?

PERTH. Clouds, clouds.

UBEDA. O friend of mine — !

Enter ALARCON.

ALARCON. Sir, I have returned to offer you
A rank among my men as fits your blood.

UBEDA. He has not heard.

ALAR. O then we'll lighten him.

I am the Admiral of the Argonauts —

PERTH. The Argonauts ! Jason is dead and dust,
The Golden Fleece was but a thin marsh light,
The grave-torch of Desire.

ALAR. Our Fleece is new,
We sail toward the star that draws the pole —

PERTH. Toward the star ! You go by way of the sky ?

ALAR. Why yes, beneath it.

PERTH. O beneath, beneath,
That is to stay within the selfsame place.

ALAR. No, for we'll sail for many and many a league,
But in the end the thing we seek will find us,
For like all things 'twill have an ending.

PERTH. Ashes.

ALAR. Under the wise lode-planet we will find
All the desires of men since Genesis.

Lost Eden has revealed itself again ;
A priest named Nizza has discovered it.

UBEDA. He has indeed seen many hidden things.
All good things have been rarer since man's fall,
And who shall say we will not find them there ?

ALAR. Great wealth !

UBEDA. Honour !

ALAR. And Fame !

UBEDA. And even Love !

ALAR. And Youth !

PERTH. Youth !

UBEDA. No, there may be many things

But never that. Time Past cannot be born

Of Now or Time-to-come.

ALAR. Yes, even Youth ;

For I was with Don Ponce de Leon

In Florida unto dark Bimini.

UBEDA. 'Twas not there ?

ALAR. No, but as we fought our way

Back to the world, a native told to me

The secret ; it is in this same dim north

And in the place Fray Nizza calls Quevera.

UBEDA. Let us not fledge our hopes on pinnacles,

For they will soar full high even from the gulphs.

ALAR. Think of the Seven Cities of Cibola,

With all its roofs of gold.

PERTH. O God, roofs ! roofs !

Always the Screen. —

ALAR. But will you sail with us ?

You shall be listed as an officer.

PERTH. The stars are sown too thick. —

ALAR. Sir ?

PERTH. Will I sail ?

I thank you Sir. And you most true and kind.

ALAR. But will you sail ?

PERTH. Who knows ?

UBEDA. He must have time
To gather thoughts and mould his mind again.

ALAR. He must decide, we march within the hour.

UBEDA. Then start without us, I will bide with him
And overtake the retinue to-morrow.

ALAR. And bring him with you?

UBEDA. It may be.

ALAR. Farewell then.

UBEDA. Farewell.

[*Exit* ALARCON.

PERTH. Farewell! There is a word I know!

UBEDA. Come with me to the outside air and light
And we will talk of hope and of this sailing.

PERTH. Dead leaves — they do not sail — they drift
— are blown.

Who blows them? Why, a wind. — What wind? —
Darkness.

Upon what sea? Of dreaming —! Dreaming what? —
Who dreams? — More darkness —

UBEDA. Outside it is noon!
And I will make you see it!

[*PERTH moves toward the door with the same indifferent air which he has borne throughout the scene. As he moves, a ray of bright light falls upon his face from a high, barred window. He starts violently and shades his eyes, then slowly allows it to shine full in his face.*

PERTH. [*As though trying to recall a memory.*]

Sunlight!

UBEDA. Come!

SCENE 3. — *Afternoon of the same day. In front of the Palace. The exterior of the buildings presents a curious mixture of Moorish, Gothic, and Mexican architecture. In many places the carved stones of old temples are built intact into the walls. Shattered and overthrown images and monstrous broken statues lie about as they fell eighteen years before.*

On the right is CORONADO at the head of the main body of the expedition. He keeps his eyes intently on the company with the VICEROY, who is standing above in a balcony surrounded by his court. To the left of the square is ALARCON at the head of the naval detachment. In the background appears the populace. The SOLDIERS and SAILORS are brave in their flashing parade accoutrements. Over them wave banners and pennants bearing the royal arms. All faces are bright with hope and expectation.

A CAPTAIN. Ground arms!

A VOICE. Bravo, Don Coronado!

A HERALD. Silence!

ANOTHER VOICE. And brave Alarcon!

THE HERALD. Hush, the Viceroy speaks!

MENDOZA. Captains and soldiers of the western world,
God and the King of Spain have given you
All things that mortal men have held most dear
Since grief began, for they are yours already.
They merely wait until you go and seize them.
You will see trials, no doubt, but you are strong

And the reward awaits. Each soldier shall possess
What seems most dear to him. To some 'tis gold!
To others, Beauty! Knowledge! Visions! Youth!
Let each man take his fill and afterward
Return to us — but not with empty hands.

Don Francis Coronado will proceed
To Compostella, there reorganize
With more recruits and then march to the north
And victory. You, Don Alarcon, sail
As Admiral along the western shore
North from Natividad, explore the coast
And somewhere in the northland strive to meet
Don Coronado and there reinforce him.

A HERALD. Both land and naval columns march at
once.

A VOICE. A brave speech!

A CAPTAIN. Shoulder arms!

A WOMAN. Alarcon!

A CAPTAIN. March!

*[Exeunt the two columns by distinctly separate
ways; CORONADO'S to the left, ALARCON'S
to the right. CORONADO keeps his eyes al-
ways on the balcony and marches away.]*

A WOMAN. See, Coronado turns his brave eyes back-
ward.

2D WOMAN. 'Tis eyes in search of eyes.

1ST WOMAN. Not yours, I warrant.

AN AGED MAN. If I were not so old —

A CHILD. Let's follow them.

[Exeunt all.]

SCENE 4. — *The same.* — *Enter PERTH and UBEDA slowly.*

UBEDA. Here's a flower. [*Plucking one.*]

PERTH. Yes, — flowers.

UBEDA. Do you remember them?

PERTH. A few; three roses and one violet.

UBEDA. Does the sun now seem warm to you?

PERTH. Yes, — outside

Upon my garments and even on my flesh.

UBEDA. Lean now against this tree. How strong it is!

PERTH. Strange proof, thus to find evil even in trees.

[*The sound of trumpets.*]

UBEDA. The march passes the walls; if we go now
We may rejoin them there.

PERTH. It would be useless.

UBEDA. In what way?

PERTH. If to go would be an ill,

I need not hasten; it will come to me.

And if a good, they will have gone too far;

I could not overtake them.

[*Enter CORONADO breathless and wearing the
disordered mien of one in great mental dis-
tress.*]

COR. [*To himself.*] She was not there!

PERTH. Not there! Why no, how could she? She
is dead.

COR. God —

UBEDA. Peace, how could he mean the one you seek!

PERTH. Not her! Who then?

COR. I charge you by your cross —

UBEDA. My son, you are Don Francis Coronado?

COR. But she —

UBEDA. Whom do you seek?

COR. A lady of court.

UBEDA. None has been here.

COR. I see! She was not there!

She never would have failed! She is kept prisoner!

O Friar, may all your saints damn such a father!

For it was he. I'll stay —

[The trumpets are again heard more faintly.]

UBEDA. There are your trumpets.

COR. She — What grim shade are you, sent here to judge me?

Her desperate need cries with a voice that drowns —

UBEDA. Your honour?

COR. Can it be?

[The trumpets are again heard.]

UBEDA. Your trumpets call you.

COR. It is no call, but rather do their sounds

Lash me like brazen whips away from her.

They shriek two names to me, Honour and Hell.

They drive me with two words, Duty and Death.

Those are the things that I can only find

Outside her arms!

[He remains dumb and motionless for a moment, then stretches his arms with abandonment of great yearning toward the Palace.]

O Silent! Wounded! Best!

If you have ever heard the unspoken things,
Hear now; keep to the end our unkept tryst.
Melt some one link from all the chaining flesh
And breathe one whisper to the waiting wind,
To bear to me upon the road to —

*[He turns mechanically toward the direction
taken by the troops. The trumpets blow
again far in the distance. He makes to go,
but moves with the mien of one who is blind.
His lips frame one word.]*

Where! *[Exit.*

UBEDA. That man is Captain-General of the force
Proceeding north by land; a brave, true soldier,
But he is young.

PERTH. I would have known his youth,
Though he had worn a wrinkled, palsied body
And every sign of age, for he rebels
Against the slumber settled on his eyes,
He struggles yet. Whose name was it he called?

UBEDA. I do not know. He leaves some heart behind.

PERTH. Hearts always are left so. 'Tis in the Dream.

*[Enter BEATRIX in complete armour with closed
visor.]*

BEATRIX. Have all departed?

UBEDA. Sir, you are tardy, yes.

Hasten, for even now they pass the lake.

BEAT. I — have not been enlisted yet.

UBEDA. Then come

With our adventurers who go north by sea.

We need enforcement more than those by land.

BEAT. By sea!

UBEDA. Yes, with the Admiral Alarcon
Who is to join the Captain-General.

BEAT. Where?

UBEDA. Somewhere in the dim north.

BEAT. [*Suddenly after a pause.*] I will go.

UBEDA. Well said. And now I pray you raise your
visor.

BEAT. I cannot.

UBEDA. Why?

BEAT. I am a fugitive.

PERTH. Why, so are all mankind!

UBEDA. You need not fear.

We'll not betray you, for this northward quest

Is righteous and a penance for your sins.

BEAT. If you should know me you would ruin all.

UBEDA. We could not know your face, for I arrived

But yesterday from Spain to join Alarcon,

And this poor gentleman to-day was freed

From thirty years in dungeons.

[*She raises the visor.*]

You are young!

PERTH. [*Starting.*] A boy! O cruelty! He is too
tender

To face his dream. — Ubeda, I was older.

Lad, take my hand, — I will be stronger soon.

And then I'll help you bear — this weight of sky.

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE I. — *Six months later. The deck of the Santa Caterina, ALARCON's flagship. The ship is anchored in the Colorado River, just inside the sand-bars that stretch across the mouth of the river where it empties into the Gulf of California. Nearby are discovered, also riding at anchor, the two other ships that compose the fleet. Beyond them are seen the sand-dunes of the eastern bank.*

On the deck is a common SAILOR, sleeping. Enter another SAILOR and shakes him.

SAILOR. Waken, you loose piece of coiled rope! You sleep like the old dried dolphin nailed on the lid of the tar-vat! You were only on in two watches last night, and here the morning is almost past.

2D SAILOR. [*Rousing.*] What news?

1ST SAILOR. Now there you do yourself proud, to ask such a question, for 'tis hard to answer.

2D SAILOR. Why no question is hard to answer, unless, indeed, one should tell the truth.

1ST SAILOR. Well, I could not but be half a liar to this kind of question, for the following reason, to wit: you ask me shortly, "What news?" Now if I should answer you in kind, to wit: shortly or briefly as, "well" or "ill" I would be giving you but one fin or the tail of this slippery fish called truth.

2D SAILOR. How would that be?

1ST SAILOR. Because, saying "what news" you mean the weather.

2D SAILOR. Yes.

1ST SAILOR. Now if you mean the weather that God makes out of water and sun and things that blow, I could say truthfully, "all's well," for the fog lifts and the heat's as warm as a drink of bottled things. But if you mean the weather that's in men's hearts on yonder ship, then the truth flops clear of the wet to shout "ill," for the fog is on their souls as close as a house on land.

2D SAILOR. Well, the Admiral went to speak to them at dawn and he'll hearten them.

[Noises from the water below the deck's edge, the sound of oars and voices.]

A VOICE. Ho, watch!

1ST SAILOR. Here they come back. *[Running to the side.]* All's well, cast up!

THE VOICE. Heave.

Enter over the ship's side ALARCON and his suite.

ALARCON. Let the six chiefest officers retire
With me into my cabin. In an hour
We will announce to all our firm decision
Whether to go or stay.

[Exeunt ALARCON and OFFICERS, the rest disperse into groups about the deck. In the foreground several SOLDIERS and SAILORS meet.]

A SAILOR. He's a pale-hearted fool that says go back.

[*The SAILOR is dressed in dirty leather. He is lithe, muscular, with a brutal, drink-swollen face.*

A SOLDIER. I would rather show the whiteness of my liver than of my bones, as they would bleach on yonder sands.

THE SAILOR. Now you have said enough for the yard-arm. That's mutiny!

2D SOLDIER. Mutiny! Now there's a good word. What may that word mean?

THE SAILOR. 'Tis a pudding made of bilge-water and wormy meal and tastes sweet or bitter according to how long 'tis cooked.

3D SOLDIER. Why is it that you don't want to go back to Mexico?

THE SAILOR. We must all bear injustice. Some say I did a thing and some say not, but the man died, and—

4TH SOLDIER. A rope has a claw with a reach.

THE SAILOR. Well, now you are wise.

[*Exeunt all save the SAILOR. Enter BEATRIX from behind a mast where she has evidently been listening. She is no longer in mail, but is clothed in the garb of a page.*

BEATRIX. Will they return?

SAILOR. [*Turning with his hand on his knife.*] How's this? The Admiral's page spying?

BEAT. Not by his authority. 'Tis but a personal fear against returning.

SAILOR. Against! Ho, ho! So you too have done a thing to dangle for. Save us from hell! Here's a

youngster ! How can such a pretty fellow lead so ill a life ? You're the whitest thing I ever saw that had rolled in the pitch of sin. Well, you'll hang all the earlier.

BEAT. I fear no death, but I'll not return with Alarcon.

SAILOR. Good ! If he decides to go back I leave him. How with you ?

BEAT. Do you think we could meet — the land expedition ?

SAILOR. Most likely, but even the doubt is better than to make the midnight wind a rattle ! Will you go ?

BEAT. Try the men and see how many will go with us.

SAILOR. Shall I tell them you'll go ?

BEAT. I will not return with Alarcon.

[*Exit SAILOR.*]

Enter PERTH and UBEDA talking earnestly.

[*To PERTH.*] Good morning Sir.

PERTH. [*Looking intently at her.*] May all the day be fair

With you as it is now. Is it as fair

This morning to be young ?

BEAT. [*Going.*] I have not thought.

Ah, I am called.

[*Exit.*]

UBEDA. What do you gaze on now ?

PERTH. If they had only left me some one thing,

Ubeda, out of all the utter wreck !

Some little thing, to own, to feel, to cherish, —

Some little stricken blossom out of all

That ruined garden, O I would have reared it

So tenderly, so gently pity-full !

UBEDA. You could not have done so while you were
prisoned.

PERTH. No, I forgot, the wretched gardener perished
With his one bloom. —

UBEDA. What stirred the mist again
Within your heart? You have been faintly cheerful.

PERTH. A blessed dew called Youth fell in the old
days!

It was a lulling balm that healed all grievings.

'Tis gone! I lost it! And yet, I remember

How soft! How solacing! All suffering

Was soothed and made more bearable for men

By this far, perilous spell of Youth — Youth!

UBEDA. What stirred the mist?

PERTH. The presence of the page.

I never watch his fairness without thinking

How I might now be finding my old hours

Renewed in some such form. If those dead days

Had not been pitiless to all the living,

They might have left a son to me. —

UBEDA. They did!

O brave, sweet soldier, fasten now your mind

Within your eyes! It roves too much to the sky.

And even your eyes have fed too much on air!

PERTH. You said — I heard — you told me —

UBEDA. Yes, of truth.

You have a son. He is no doubt alive.

PERTH. In what world?

UBEDA. This!

PERTH. In this world all are dead.

UBEDA. Not all in this world.

He struggled long and now builds toward greatness.
Seek not to crush the work of all these years.
He would proclaim his birth unto all men,
And men would echo him again with ruin !
For who would ask if prison were unjust ?

[PERTH'S *head bows again as though with the heaviest weight of all, but the fire just lighted in his eyes does not die.*

PERTH. But I may know a name ?

UBEDA. I dare not tell you.

It is the Church's secret ! It is best.

PERTH. How should I know him out of all the world ?

UBEDA. I must not speak his name.

PERTH. But if you perish

And it would die with you ?

UBEDA. Then by this sign :

Upon his hand the crucifix is branded !

He did it foolishly in youth as penance

For some imagined fault. The scar is seared.

The cross shows white and plainly on the flesh !

PERTH. Which hand ?

UBEDA. The right.

PERTH. I thank you for this much.

'Tis something. I will search the world for hands !

And when I find him I will know him then,

That will be all — he will not know. But I —

I may — who knows but that I shall — in secret

Be helpful to him, warm him with my love,

Love which he cannot give again to me.

How could he ? It is best — he will not know.

O eyes, when you first look upon his face,
 Wear masks, lest something in you speak to him.
 O lips, put fetters on the thing within —
 Fetters, fetters! I thought long ago,
 There in the dark, that I had done with chains!
 I did not know.

Enter a HERALD followed by ALARCON, his suite and the crew. All faces are joyous save that of ALARCON. He speaks in a monotonous tone half to himself.

THE HERALD. Let all the officers
 Attend the Admiral's announcement.

ALARCON. Friends,
 We have tried and failed. There is no more to say.
 I merely speak now to encourage you
 To face what will be harder than this north.
 'Twill take a braver spirit to return
 Than to remain. For Welcome only smiles
 Upon successful men, and we are failures.
 As for Don Coronado and his men,
 They have, no doubt, ere this reached that far land,
 Found their desires and do not need our aid.
 Yet we have tried. You are all brave and strong,
 And ruin seems unjust; some are still young
 And may win Fortune back. But I am old.
 Age is a heavy thing — what sound was that?

[Noises of cries and running feet and splashes are heard below and from the water. Enter a SAILOR running.]

SAILOR. Two men have pushed off with a head for shore!

ALAR. Where?

SAILOR. Here, off port!

AN OFFICER. We cannot catch them now.
They have the new longboat.

ALAR. There is no need,
We want no cowards to return.

PERTH. Who are they?

UBEDA. I cannot tell.

ALAR. What does the lookout say?

A SAILOR. [*From the shrouds.*] I see them now! It
is the Admiral's page!

UBEDA. The boy!

PERTH. And helpless!

[*They exchange a hurried glance and rush below.*]

ALAR. Tristan! He's no coward!
Some one has led him off! Who is the man?

THE LOOKOUT. A convict from the galleys.

ALAR. Bring them back!
The boy is mad!

AN OFFICER. [*From the ship's side.*] Some one starts
in pursuit.

Look, there slips the old boat beneath our bows!

ALAR. Who's in her?

AN OFFICER. One is the good priest, Ubeda,
The other is the silent English soldier!

ALAR. Good! They are men will bring them back or
die!

[*The LOOKOUT aloft gives a cry.*]

What now!

LOOKOUT. The first boat beaches!

ALAR. That is well,
 Pursuit will be far easier by land.
 Poor little Tristan! Youth makes him unhappy —
 And how with me? Oh, is it age — or life?

SCENE 2. — *Afternoon of same day. A desolate and rocky place on the eastern shore. The end of a small blind cañon. Enter BEATRIX in armour with raised visor. She is stopped by wall of rock to which she turns her back and faces PERTH who follows close behind.*

PERTH. You must be mad! This heat has turned
 your brain!

BEATRIX. Perhaps — [*To herself*] — but not my heart.

PERTH. What would you do?

BEAT. Stay here.

PERTH. To starve?

BEAT. I have starved all my life.
 It will be no new thing.

PERTH. But all your life!
 What words! You know not what life is.

BEAT. Do you?

PERTH. Do I know what life is! It is to starve.

BEAT. Return to hunger then, I will seek food.

I know not with what spirit you pursue me.

If it is kindness, you are thanked. Then go.

If you wish cruelty — you shall thank me.

For I will show you blood of mine or yours.

PERTH. Poor troubled boy — [*He approaches her.*

BEAT. [*In desperate excitement.*] Stand back!

[*She draws her sword.*

PERTH. You must return.
Upon the ship your mind will come again.

[*He goes nearer.*]

BEAT. [*Fiercely.*] Back!

PERTH. It grows late. Your arm is not like mine.
See, mine is trained.

BEAT. Once more, do not advance!

PERTH. Be wary then, stand fast, I will not harm you.

[*He draws his sword.*]

The sport may smooth your brow. Watch for my
trick,

For at the third pass I will have your weapon

By the old Stratford twist —

BEAT. You shall have death!

[*He advances a pace. She rushes desperately
at him. They fight. PERTH coolly, BEATRIX
with hot, murderous intent.*]

PERTH. Once!

BEAT. Back!

PERTH. Twice!

BEAT. Queen of Heaven —!

PERTH. Three times!

[*He twists the sword from her hand.*]

BEAT. Ah!

[*She falls fainting into a half-sitting posture
against the sloping wall of rock at her back.*]

PERTH. Sweet lad, you are not wounded! 'Tis a
swoon.

[*He goes to her.*]

The corselet binds his neck and breast — here's air —

[He tears open her armour at the throat and bends over to listen at her heart, then staggers back.]

Dear God —

[She stirs and half rises.

BEAT. Mary —

[She sees PERTH staring at her and stands upright clutching her loosened corselet at the throat.]

You know —

PERTH.

O pitiful !

BEAT. What will you do ?

PERTH.

Who are you ?

BEAT.

You know not,

Nor shall.

PERTH. Why did you come ?

BEAT.

It is a vow

To Holy Church. Now go.

PERTH.

Where ?

BEAT.

To the ships.

PERTH. With you.

BEAT.

No, not alive !

Enter UBEDA.

UBEDA.

Have done with words.

The ships are gone !

BEAT.

Gone !

UBEDA.

See where the low sun

Reddens that highest rock. An hour ago

I gained that point to overlook the fleet

In time to see each weary-freighted galleon

Swing slowly from her moorings and point south.

PERTH. Alarcon !

UBEDA. He is blameless. When we landed
We first ran southward and we did not turn
While their strained eyes could follow. They now
think

To coast down stream attending us to-night
And sight us at the dawn.

PERTH. But they will not.

UBEDA. No, we can never overtake them now.

BEAT. Mother of Pity, I thank thee for this boon !

UBEDA. [*Looking at her.*] Poor lad —

PERTH. Ubeda, do you see?

UBEDA. Ah yes, still mad.

PERTH. O do you not see what the pity is?

BEAT. It is not now a thing deserving pity
More than at any time since that far day
When God's own mother knew her earliest grief.

UBEDA. A woman ! Well, God has no bitterer grief
In store for you than that you should be here.
How happens it?

PERTH. She says it is a vow.

UBEDA. Are you a nun ?

BEAT. Yes, of a secret order.

I go to set up new shrines to my patron.

UBEDA. The one shrine now left to us is the grave.

PERTH. A hope remains.

UBEDA. Remains ! And on your lips !

PERTH. Only the hope of further life, no more.

At noon, hot in pursuit, I passed a village

Where dwell a people native to this place —

Rude, kindly men who made me know by signs,

Pointing toward the birthplace of the sun,
That there they had seen men like to ourselves.

BEAT. Life!

UBEDA. And how far?

PERTH. A journey of ten days.

UBEDA. It is the only path left for our feet.

PERTH. Where is the convict?

UBEDA. I have left him bound
The third part of a league below this place.

PERTH. No doubt his wrongs are many, being, as
he is,

A living thing. He must share in our hope.

UBEDA. He shall.

PERTH. Yet she — he left the ship with her.

'Tis best that she continue to appear

To him the page, a boy.

UBEDA. He shall not know.

PERTH. When you return I will go seek for her

Some lodgment in the village through this night

Where she may have a woman to attend her.

[*Exit UBEDA.*]

[*PERTH stands silent for a time during which
BEATRIX several times tries to strengthen
her will to speak. At last she does so.*]

BEAT. Forgive me.

PERTH. And for what?

BEAT. All my wild words
To you who are so gentle.

PERTH. Yesterday

And yesterhour and all past time leaves us

Nothing, not even ourselves. We change and change
Ever, not being aware till afterward.

Would it not be idle to remember words?

Bubbles of bubbles? Light things, wandering chords,
Voiced by a passing and impermanent wind?

BEAT. I myself do not change.

PERTH. Ah, do you not?

And yet an hour ago you seemed to be

What now you are not.

BEAT. Yet an hour ago

My soul composed itself of the same thing

That fills it with one hope, one wish, one will:

To journey eastward.

PERTH. [*Dreamily as he looks at her.*]

What is in the east?

BEAT. Did you not say he said, "men like ourselves"?

PERTH. So —

BEAT. It is — Coronado and his men!

PERTH. [*Still as in a dream with his eyes fixed upon her face.*] You go to set up shrines, and to what saint?

BEAT. No saint, but to an image of all the world.

PERTH. Look, in the west are images enough!

BEAT. It is red.

PERTH. But with the red of ruins,

Ruins of flaming shrines, not one remains

Inviolatè as the devouring sun

Deepens its wormlike course to the world's edge.

Below it wait the gilded images,

Behind, above, a train of dying sparks.

BEAT. O, but to-morrow! [*She turns her face.*]

PERTH. And what then?

BEAT. The east!

PERTH. [*Starting.*] Ah, yes — I had forgotten — I
— O God,

This is that spirit of Youth's Hope that died!
Died? It was hardly born. 'Twas buried with me
In the first darkness.

BEAT. Hope is not a spirit.

It is a sea stretching before our path.

Ah, it is sweet! sweet! How else could I live,
Or any mortal thing? Sir, take my hand.

May I not help? The sea is infinite.

Can you catch some sound or sight of it?

PERTH. Yes, it is in your eyes like some great blossom
Poised on the vibrant bosom of a pool.

BEAT. But, oh, do you not also see it there?

[*She points to the east.*

PERTH. The curtain of the years hangs like the night
Across the world, —

[*She turns again to him.*]

Yet dawn is in your eyes.

BEAT. And in yours too, there is reflected light.

PERTH. Is it so?

BEAT. There is a light as of old embers
Rekindling.

PERTH. Fragments of old dawns are there.

BEAT. I see them!

PERTH. Or some long-since buried sun,
Now ice and iron.

BEAT. But they begin to glow
Faintly into a hint of rose-hued fire.

PERTH. It is from the east. [*With his eyes on hers.*

[illegible]

[*He does not take his eyes from hers, but stands silent.*]

Sir, do you sleep?

PERTH. [*Finally rousing.*] I do not know which is
the sleep and which
The awakening.

Enter UBEDA with the CONVICT, who stands some distance apart from the others.

UBEDA. The man will go with us.
Take heart! behold a sign there overhead!
The sky is clear; we seem to have left behind
That evening cloud-bank westward.

PERTH. In the west
To-day's sun dies, being old.

BEAT. But in the east —

PERTH. To-morrow!

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE 1. — *Night. — Ten days later. — Interior of the West Room in Casa Grande, Arizona. The room is large, rectangular, and lined with red ochre glazed like enamel. The audience is supposed to look into one of the long sides of the Hall. Near the right end of the rear wall is a low doorway. Against the wall of the right end is fixed a large beam evidently fallen from the roof. Toward the right from the center of the room and nearly on a line with the doorway, is a great pile of camp trappings ; blankets, cloaks, arms. Upon this heap is seated CORONADO. His head is sunken on his breast, his eyes are staring, and his dress greatly disordered. His appearance is that of one plunged in the most abject despair and wretchedness of body and mind. Most of the time he does not raise his head. Before him stands an OFFICER of the guard.*

OFFICER. The outside watch was first to question them.

CORONADO. What manner of beings are they ?

OFF. One's a man.

The second is fashioned like a slender youth.

The third one is a priest. The fourth, a slave.

COR. First I will see the man.

[*Exit OFFICER.*]

More and yet more

Each scorpion hour along each bleeding league
 Drives me more close toward the desperate truth.
 Wraiths, fogs, mists, clouds, what a chimera quest !
 All was before my eyes yet nothing seen.
 Mendoza or Estrada, Hate or Fear,
 One of these two, or both, by these foul means
 Has thus rid Mexico of all its flower.
 Estrada ! It was he that prisoned her !
 'Tis he that sends me out to die, and now —

Enter OFFICER with PERTH.

O creeping things ! He dogs me with these spies !
 I've heard your story.

PERTH.

It is well —

COR.

A lie !

The tale was sickly and is dead already.
 All lie ! There is no truth ! Fray Nizza lied !
 We have seen no gold save in the fatal sun.
 Dry flats, like those in upper hell, led on
 Only to hills more desolate with thirst.
 And red lights mocked our thirst, and yellow lights
 Our dreams of bread. And every purple night
 Was charged with unseen cohorts of the pit
 And unknown dread, until this night, and now —
 Now they assume the likenesses of spies !
 Enough ! Summon the priest.

[The OFFICER goes to the doorway and immediately returns with UBEDA.]

You feign to have come

North with Alarcon ?

UBEDA. Feign!

COR. Where is Alarcon?

UBEDA. He has returned to Port Natividad.

COR. And where is that?

UBEDA. Upon a mighty gulf
Thwarted from the main sea by certain lands
Named California.

COR. O perverted tongue!
Natividad looks on the open sea.

[*He turns to the OFFICER with a gesture of disgust.*]

Another!

[*The OFFICER brings the CONVICT from the doorway.*]

Fellow, are you too a liar?

CONVICT. Why yes, I am alive, and all who live
Must cheat the gibbet some way, and a lie
Is but a way. Yes, it is my way.

COR. Faugh!

Bring in the other.

[*The OFFICER brings in BEATRIX armoured and with closed visor.*]

Put your beaver up.

[*There is a pause during which BEATRIX stands shrinkingly. Then, at a gesture of impatience from CORONADO, the OFFICER makes as though he would force the beaver. At this movement PERTH moves threateningly toward him.*]

Seize me that man!

[*Pointing to PERTH.*]

[*PERTH is seized and bound.*]

UBEDA. [*Raising his crucifix warningly.*] The face
must not be seen.

It is a vow to Rome, and Peter's curse
Rests upon him who violates.

COR. [*Recoiling.*] The Church!

UBEDA. Vows have been made not to unveil the face
Or even speak till all things be fulfilled.

COR. The chain is now complete; if at the first
Suspicion was afloat, now it is grounded.

I know you well, false priest, and you, grey man.
From the first day your face has haunted me.

That day I sought a lady, you were there!
Even then you were Estrada's loathsome henchman.
As for the raising of that visor front

I care not. I have seen deceit enough.

But one thing troubles me: this friar's cowl
Is worn unworthy, yet Rome's beneath it.

I may not touch — but you, and you, and you
Die!

UBEDA. You are mad!

COR. [*Wildly.*] Words to the winds! At dawn
Death comes. Go, let them now be shrived.

[*PERTH makes a despairing movement toward
BEATRIX and then turns to CORONADO.*]

PERTH. You know not what you do. This iron shell
Holds all the tenderness in earth or sky,

A —

[*BEATRIX starts forward with a warning ges-
ture; he pauses.*]

COR. How he raves! He's in no mood for shriving.
Bide here awhile. Bind him against that pillar.

His soul cannot be saved while his rage foams.
Let the flood first subside. Lead out the others.

*[The OFFICER binds PERTH to the right end
wall of the room.]*

UBEDA. May I have speech with him?

COR. No plots avail,
Yet — pray, you two, bearing in memory
That schemes to save his body are all futile.
Quiet his soul and you will do your utmost.

*[Exeunt all save PERTH and UBEDA, BEATRIX
and the CONVICT being carefully guarded.]*

PERTH. Follow him! Cut these thongs! O Name of
God!

She, even she, like all the rest of it
Vanishes. She will suffer pain! Go, go!
Tell of her womanhood! —

UBEDA. We vowed to her
To hold that above all things secretly;
Yet I will break oath if all else does fail.
You too are safe. Be without thought of death.
I hold within my memory a thing
Which, whispered into Coronado's ear,
Will set you free, but I will whisper nothing
Till all else fails. That he has suffered wrongs
Is evident. His mind peers to the abyss.

PERTH. Wrongs! He has suffered wrongs, and he
would give
Wounds to a human soul, pain to a body?
Pain to a body and soul like hers? Ubeda,

What can he know of evil who does so?
Why we, who know pain, stand before one painless
Like her, as one who looks on all of heaven.
Her eyes blind me. Her breath bereaves my lips.
Her hands have made mine feeble in her presence.
Her silences have drenched me with all music.
The faintest, tender stirring of her voice
Makes mute my own. Her hair has made this desert
A shadowed place alive with bloom. Her brow
Has awed me like some symbol of the sky. —
The images of seas of fire and snow
Pent in the colours of her blood and flesh,
Drown me.

UBEDA. O has the thing I watched and feared
Grown so beyond all reckoning?

PERTH. You feared! What?

UBEDA. That which is audible without your voice.

PERTH. Ah, what?

UBEDA. The deadliest hurt of all your life.

PERTH. Put it in words.

UBEDA. You love her.

[PERTH'S *head sinks.*]

Then if Death,

Utmost, forgetful Death, could come to you

This hour, it might be wise and best.

PERTH. And why?

She is no nun!

UBEDA. I know not who she is,

Or if her love is given to any man;

But love had filled her eyes already full

Before she came.

PERTH. Her eyes have shown me dawn.

UBEDA. Think of the years that passed you in the night.

She holds you as a father, but no more.

PERTH. Her eyes have shown me day.

UBEDA. But nothing more.

The love you seek, the urge of youth for youth,

She cannot give you, for between you, Time

With visible sword and unreturning face

Drives you by separate paths, alone, apart.

PERTH. The world has grown athrob with crimson fire,
And shall no spark find lodgment in my heart?

UBEDA. Have you forgotten all? The search? The sign?

The cross? The hand?

PERTH. The boy!

UBEDA. He is not dead.

[Enter a SOLDIER leading BEATRIX, whom he chains to the long wall in the background and a little to the left of the doorway. The positions of PERTH and BEATRIX are therefore at near points on the lines of the same right angle.]

SOLDIER. This one is shrived. [Exit.]

UBEDA. I will go seek Don Francis
And reason with him if I find him calm. [Exit.]

SCENE 2. — *The same.* — PERTH and BEATRIX remain in silence for a time. Finally she raises her hands to her head with a gesture of both weariness and longing.

PERTH. I pray you raise the casque.

[*She lifts the visor.*]

There are no tears
Nor trace of any anguish on your face!

BEATRIX. What hour is it?

PERTH. I do not know; 'tis late.

BEAT. The night is hot, I would some water came:
A little — in a hand — [*To herself*] a hand I know.

PERTH. You suffer! I will call the guard —

BEAT. Do not.

The thing has passed.

PERTH. Your eyes rove ceaselessly
Toward the door, as with some new-lit fire
Of eagerness.

BEAT. Will he not soon return?

PERTH. Who?

BEAT. He whose voice I heard.

PERTH. Don Coronado's?

BEAT. What other sound was there to hear?

PERTH. Fear nothing.

BEAT. I do not, 'tis not long till dawn, and then —

PERTH. It will not be the end.

BEAT. No, the beginning.

PERTH. I will disclose to him how far remote

That steely veil is from the veil of you,
The *you* that wears no mask but womanhood.

BEAT. Are you a breaker of vows?

PERTH. 'Tis for your life.

BEAT. I bind you to your oath. When that last hour
Sheds its great period of joy upon me
I promise he shall know.

PERTH. Then you are safe.
The martyrdom you seek shall not be found.
He will not then give you to Death. He could not,
Knowing.

BEAT. Let be then, if you so believe.
Trouble no more.

PERTH. I will not. After all,
Even afterward Ubeda's gentle spirit
Will guard and give you shelter — afterward.

BEAT. After? Ah, you — he said it — and you, too,
Will die, and on my head your death!

PERTH. Not yours,
Nor against any mortal thing can blood be.
All is upon the secret, never mortal,
Above, beyond, behind us; the pursuer.

BEAT. No, I am not deceived, I led you here.
My will has been the cause, though if unwitting
Let the saints judge, 'twill be recorded justly.
In this last hour I am not penitent.

A great and numbing calm is over me.

PERTH. It seems to fold me also in its wings,
A calm more riotous than any storm.

BEAT. I seem part of the dumb, unfeeling earth,
Earth that awaits the sun to quicken it.

And yet — out of all dead regrets, one only,
One figure, yours — looms grey before my face.
Your tenderness, your gentle offices
Which I have paid with death. I would I might
Now, last of all give something — if 't could be,
Some leaven for all the woe that I have brought,
Some recompense, — but there is nothing left.
The dawn is all I have, but, ah — the dawn!

PERTH. [*Mistaking her.*] You would have given of
youth — to me?

BEAT. Ah, Youth! You still desire as though 'twere real?
Why, 'tis no tangible thing that one might give.
Yet if it were, you would have all of it,
All I possess. And yet — 'tis but a hue.

PERTH. [*With a great light of peace in his eyes.*]
It is enough. See, there above our heads!

BEAT. The roof is shattered.

PERTH. And the night pours in
Softly from its exhaustless silences.
I have so little time — only the night
Before I join it, but I ask no more —
Till dawn the dark was all, and now, this hour,
The dawn has come.

BEAT. Why no, 'tis yet long hours
Away.

PERTH. The fallacies of day and night
Fade for this little while before my eyes
And in their place a radiance has sprung
That knows no periods. It is the flame
That crowns the eternal terraces of stars
From which the suns are hurled! It is the light

That gilds the flinty ramparts of the moon !

It is the abiding torch of silver glow

Within the zone-gem of unchanging morning !

BEAT. I see no light, yet I am glad for you,

For in your eyes my words seem to have lit

Something, some good, but whether peace or hope,

Or even happiness, I know not, yet 'tis good ;

So I am glad. Ah, how the hours crawl on !

This quiet deafens me — there is a sound !

No, it was here within. There ! What was that ?

PERTH. [*With his eyes upon her face.*] Music.

BEAT. Why no, there is no sound — but — silence.

PERTH. Silence outside, but we two are within.

BEAT. Something approaches swiftly, I am cold.

PERTH. Have no fear.

BEAT. 'Tis fear itself. Ah — now !

Enter a SOLDIER.

[*He unchains BEATRIX and starts out with her.*

PERTH. What is it ? I am bound — but one word —
what ?

[*Exit SOLDIER with BEATRIX.*

SCENE 3. — *The same.* — *Enter stealthily in a crouching attitude the CONVICT. Once inside, however, his manner becomes one of bold and insolent bravado. He stands before PERTH with arms akimbo.*

CONVICT. Trussed ! And well done too, or I was born blind. Well, it's a good thing to have the doors barred once in a while ; so we get a chart of the cells

and the prisoners named. For look you, in each part of the body of man dwells an old comrade. The right hand [*Pointing to Perth's hand with a knife*], his name is Murder, and a very high-coloured blade he is. Watch him, for he is given to picking locks. The left hand [*Pointing*] in there is Friend Thievery. Feed him well, for he pays for his keep. They're not all good, though, for here in the lowest dungeons are the feet, and well they deserve their place. Bawds, panders, that have led me as bravely to a noose as they ever did to wine or a wench. There be some doors left open. Here's one, the mouth. Inside dwells Lying, a very trusty fellow once, but long ago worn out; he is old, he is old. And the eyes, there's cells that have held many a prisoner. [*He at last sees the gaze that PERTH bends upon him.*] Jesu! There's devils in them now! [*Slinking backward.*] Take them off me! I meant nothing.

PERTH. Where did the soldier lead — the one in armour?

CONVICT. Soon told. It was the moon, the moon played us false, for somehow it sifted into the eyes of the young lord and he sees no colour but red. When the priest begged leave to plead for us he raved like a devil, and now he will not wait till morning. From midnight, each hour one of us dies. Ha! have no care, the boy dies first. Much may happen before our time comes. When I heard him give the order I bit my bonds off, and here's a tooth will bit yours, for two rats can break the trap better than one.

[*He cuts PERTH'S bonds. PERTH upon being released dashes toward the doorway. The CONVICT stays him before he reaches it.*]

Go not out! There's nothing there but death. He is coming within here.

PERTH. Who, Death?

CONVICT. Why no, the young lord. [*A trumpet sounds.*] There is the signal for sleep. He lodges in this room, he'll be here in a breath. We will crouch in the shade, and when his dreams overtake him,— we will overtake his dreams.

[*PERTH suffers himself to be stayed as one not conscious of what he does. He walks slowly back to the center of the room. His lips move.*]

PERTH. Her arms — her breast — helpless —

[*Before his eyes is the center stone with the soldierly trappings upon it. Prominent among them are two arquebuses. As he stands he gradually comes to see them.*]

CONVICT. [*At his back.*] But one swift stroke —

[*PERTH starts as though smitten and stands for a moment. Then steadily and with full and cold determination he takes the guns and examines them carefully. They are loaded. They are of the wheel-lock variety, and he winds the wheels. He then takes one, leaving the other on the stone.*]

[*Starting forward.*] Too loud. We want no noise.

PERTH. [*Leveling the gun at him.*] Men of my race
Do not strike from behind, or against sleep,
Or even in silence, if it be unfair.

[*The CONVICT moves toward him snarling and threateningly.*]

Back to the shadows. Death is here.

[*The CONVICT stops and PERTH turns toward the doorway, taking a few steps as though listening. He has utterly forgotten the presence of the CONVICT who, after standing motionless for a moment, begins stealthily to creep toward PERTH, his face convulsed with rage and his dagger ready to strike. Just as he is about to do so PERTH slowly turns, impelled by occult instinct of danger. He holds the CONVICT with his eyes, then walks slowly toward him, the CONVICT slowly retreating until he has reached a darkened corner down stage, left, where he remains quelled for the time, but alert and venomous.*]

There wait.

[*Throughout the latter part of the past action noises have been heard outside, of men talking and tramping. They grow steadily louder. PERTH now half turns and listens for a moment, then going to the place where he was bound he places his back to the stone and stands in an attitude suggesting his former position, yet retaining the arquebuse. Enter CORONADO still more disheveled and wild. He shouts back angrily an order*

from the threshold, then advancing into the center of the room he suddenly pauses, passes his hand over his brow with a gesture of desperate weariness and longing; his mood changes and he seems about to collapse. He stands so for a moment, then, as by instinct, slowly raises his eyes and sees PERTH facing him with the arquebuse raised and leveled at his breast.]

The hour is late. Soon time will reach midnight,
Upon whose sombre and ghost-yielding stroke
You have ordained to stain the dark with death.
You will revoke that doom. [*He waits for reply.*]

Time still goes on —

You will annul the order — [*He pauses again.*]

I would wait

But the impatient minutes would touch twelve,
And at the touch one dies. It shall not be
The armoured prisoner! It shall not be
You, if the prisoner's sentence is made void —
By you, instead of Death. — [*He again waits.*] Choose.

[*Another pause.*] Now. [*A silence ensues.*] 'Tis ended.

Do not think of Justice as a thing
Now dead. You shall avenge. There is requital.

[*He points to the arquebuse on the stone at CORONADO'S side. CORONADO has throughout remained motionless and dumb with his eyes fixed upon PERTH as though fascinated by something in a dream. He now slowly turns his gaze upon the gun.*]

You do not go alone. Take up the piece.

[CORONADO *slowly comes to understand the words and mechanically takes the gun and points it, fumbling at the lock as if for the match.*]

The lock is wound. You shall give word to fire.

[*As they face each other, UBEDA appears in the doorway. He stands aghast for a second, then makes an instinctive movement toward them as though to save. PERTH sees and addresses him.*]

Bide there. You cannot stay the fatal wings

That hover over us. [To COR.] I wait the signal.

[To UBEDA.] Move not or he shall die though he be dumb.

[Again to COR.] Once more. Declare the sign.

[UBEDA *makes again as though he would move to stay them, but PERTH immediately steadies his aim at CORONADO as though to fire at once, and the PRIEST again pauses, seemingly torn by some inward struggle. Twice he essays to speak, then finally, seeming to cast aside some inner voice, he breaks silence.*]

UBEDA. [*Pointing to CORONADO.*] The sign is there!

Not for your ears, but for your soul's own eyes!

Look on the hand that fingers there your death!

The right! The cross is there! You have the sign!

[PERTH *realizes that CORONADO is his son. An instant later the CONVICT, who has until*

now remained in his corner behind CORONADO, unknown to any save PERTH, creeps swiftly and stealthily out with his dagger raised to strike CORONADO in the back. PERTH sees and acts instantaneously, shifting his gun toward the CONVICT and touching it off just as the dagger is about to fall. The CONVICT pitches to the ground. Instantly all is confusion. Outside is heard the sounds of the camp awakening. GUARDS rush to the door. PERTH stands motionless, his gun fallen, gazing at CORONADO, who seems to have been only half awakened from his dream-like state by the shot.

VOICES OUTSIDE. Ho, guard! Within!

Enter an OFFICER pushing aside the GUARDS who crowd the doorway.

OFFICER. Stand back! What violence here?
Don Francis, did you call?

COR. [*Unnerved, pointing to PERTH.*] Lead him
without.

UBEDA. [*Springing forward.*] Yield me but two gifts
for an instant's use.

Your eyes and brain. Look upon this dead hand!
See what it holds! Think what it meant to do!
Know it is dead and you alive! By what?
Not by the grace of one who is a spy;
For spies are enemies to their victim's safety.
So, if he spied, 'twas only on the act
Of him he killed. Will you now let him die?
Being innocent? Being saviour of your life?

COR. [*Shuddering, yet half convinced.*] I did not see.

[*To the OFFICERS and GUARDS.*] Leave us.

[*He motions for them to remove the body of the*

CONVICT. *They do so. Exeunt all but*

CORONADO, UBEDA, and PERTH.]

[*Doubtingly.*] He sought to slay me. —

UBEDA. Yet would not see you slain dishonourably.

COR. Ha! Is it true?

UBEDA. He only sought your life
To save another.

COR. [*After a long pause.*] Yes, of a truth he did.
And yet—he wished my death. — Yet—saved me
from it. [*Suddenly deciding.*]

The deed outweighs the earlier intention,
And neither shows him less than honourable.
Sir, forgive me. If I have seemed bloody,
It was—the wound; a wound I have received
That numbs my judgment and makes all the world
Appear masked as a plotter to deceive me.

[*Since the shot PERTH has never taken his eyes
from CORONADO. He seems not conscious
of what is being said. But now the sound
of a trumpet and the tramp of feet are heard
just outside and figures with torches are
seen, through the doorway, passing. PERTH
starts violently and turns to the door.*

PERTH. The hour? O God! Hasten, or even now
The life will still elude us!

COR. What life?

PERTH. [*Running to the doorway, where he is stopped by
the GUARDS.*] All!

UBEDA. The prisoner who there passes to the death.
'Tis midnight —

COR. [*Remembering.*] Hold! The order will be stayed
For further hearing. [*To the GUARDS.*] Summon the
condemned.

UBEDA. Hearing there can be none save from our
mouths.

The prisoner's lips are sealed. [*He signs the cross.*

PERTH. Yet for those lips

I whom you have judged innocent will vouch
And give my life as surety.

COR. Enough

Blood has been shed. Something is satiated,
Something, I know not what. Malignant fiend
Or sneering fate whatever name it bears
'Gainst which suspicion is my only blade
Has for a time withdrawn. I may disarm.

[*BEATRIX is led in and CORONADO addresses the
GUARD.*]

The prisoners are free. Let each be given
Such lodgment as we have for officers.

Show them their several tents. [*To BEATRIX.*] You
have a vow,

I will not hold you from fulfilling it.

Go now.

[*With sudden abandonment of love under mask
of gratitude, BEATRIX kneels, takes his hand
and presses it to the helmet, then to her
breast. CORONADO beholds the gesture with
the mien of one who receives a mortal*

wound. He stares at her a moment, then with a cry of desperation he speaks.]

What is it? I — the deadly wound!
 It never heals. [*To himself.*] 'Twas something in the
 gesture. [*He turns weakly to PERTH and UBEDA.*]
 Stay, do not leave me yet. It is a fever
 — I must not be alone.

[*BEATRIX, under stress of powerful emotion, has staggered to the doorway, where she would fall but is supported by UBEDA who reaches her first.*

UBEDA. The pilgrim faints
 And must retire. 'Tis weariness.

COR. [*Feebly.*] The guard
 Will see him safely to his quarters; go.

[*UBEDA summons the GUARD from just without and gives BEATRIX, who has now recovered consciousness, into his charge. Exeunt BEATRIX and GUARD.*]

Speak to me, gentlemen! I must not hear it! [*He seems to listen to something unheard by the others.*]

The voice! It calls me now!

PERTH. [*Standing before him with his eyes fixed. Dreamily.*] The voice! Ah, yes.

COR. Silence! You do not hear. It is a moan
 Only for me and burdened with one word,
 "Return!" Why not? [*Wildly and half to himself.*]

What is there here for her?

Not gold. And gold was all I came to seek —
 For her — to purchase life. And here is only

Death, and the echoing sob that wails my name
And begs my presence. [*He pauses to listen.*] It is
ended now.

[*He speaks to empty air.*]

Rest you, dear heart, this night. At dawn we start.

PERTH. Where?

COR. [*More wildly.*] To the bourne of best desires
behind us.

PERTH. You would lose all!

COR. Ha, lose! No! Find!

PERTH. And what?

COR. More than I gain by keeping on the way.
Before me there is nothing.

PERTH. But behind —

COR. Is life!

PERTH. Ah, no, but death.

COR. Be it so; death lulls.

[*To himself.*] A breast awaits me there to die upon.

PERTH. Yet even within the briefness of this moment
You begged that we might speak and deafen you
To this false summons.

COR. O God, speak again!

I must not falter so.

PERTH. Hold fast my hand.

COR. Why do you search me with your eyes? You too
Have suffered. Even now it writhes within you.

[PERTH, at the words, gazes at CORONADO
with such great longing and sorrow that the
PRIEST, fearing he will break silence, bends
forward and speaks to him aside.]

UBEDA. You that have heard, remember, other ears
Must still be deaf, and you with lips released,
Prison your tongue.

COR. Have you no word of help?

PERTH. [*Controlling himself with a visible effort.*]

You will not falter now. Far in the south
There gleams an orb that seems to lure you back-
ward.

Use it not so; it is a beacon lit
To guide a conqueror. It would be obscured
If you should face it now with vanquished eyes.
Within the northern sky its lonely mate
Burns its white fire nor ever lets us know
How it may yearn toward the opposite heaven.

COR. The sky is cold. Your words creep in like
winter,

Cooling the feverish blood only to freeze it.

PERTH. [*After a pause.*] And of your birth — be
worthy.

COR. Ha! My birth!

Have I so sunk as to need such reminder?

“Be worthy,” yes, it means, be strong, be true,
And brave — and proud! For such has been the race
That bore me. —

You have won, — your low-breathed words
Stir in me like the clarion of trumpets.

I will not falter now. To you the thanks
Belong. What man are you? You seem to me
Some cloud shaped like a man, sent from the sky
To cool my heated vision of despair.
Who are you?

[*The PRIEST involuntarily makes a gesture of warning to PERTH, but PERTH does not seem to have heard the question.*]

PERTH. Shaped, say you? O more! What part
Of all these clay-born shadows that here strut
And seem to will is not a driven mist,
All grey? Though some that face the dawn seem tinted,
Yet the first breath of day dispels their colours,
And with the earliest breath of fearsome night
They themselves disappear.

COR. Ah, you are right,
'Tis not the hour for questions. [*He pauses and looks
at PERTH, who remains with his eyes fixed upon
CORONADO as though he did not hear.*]

Well, muse on,
To-morrow you may tell your name and rank.
The night grows old, let us all search for sleep.

[*PERTH mechanically makes to go.*]

Not so; bide here. We will seek other quarters.

I owe you much and I may yet again
Owe more; the pitfalls cluster, I am weak.

PERTH. You will not stumble now, the prize is near —
And you have youth, and whosoc'er has youth —
Has all, I — am not young.

COR. What? You wish youth?
You whose very years have been the oil
That soothed me? Strange! Yet be of better cheer.
'Tis there!

PERTH. [*Dully.*] Where?

COR. In that Eden that awaits us,
Eastward from the Seven Cities of Gold.

Even yesterday I questioned one returning;
 A sun-born native stripling in whom youth
 Seethed like a tide of dawn; yet he was older
 Than twice a thousand years! Each time he felt
 The withering beckoner within his blood,
 He sought Quevera and the hidden source,
 Laved his old limbs in that immortal rain
 And lived again!

[*He starts to go and addresses UBEDA.*]

Come, brother, you shall sleep
 Within my hall to give me aid at sunrise,
 With early mass and orison. [*To PERTH.*] Good night.
 UBEDA. [*To PERTH.*] And peace be with you.
 COR. [*Pausing on the threshold.*] And remember still
 The Font is there! [*He points to the northeast.*]

[*Exeunt CORONADO and UBEDA. PERTH follows CORONADO with his eyes filled with unutterable longing until he has gone.*]

PERTH. O God, 'tis everywhere!
 But where for me? Youth, love, or hope fulfilled,
 Whatever dew distils from out its depths,
 Sparkles till it has lured my eager lips
 And then sinks back. 'Tis in his desolate heart —
 And yet I may not drink. 'Tis in her eyes —
 And yet my own cannot be cooled by it.
 The wilderness of life is full of wells,
 But each is barred and walled about and guarded.
 The ocean's floor of moving emerald
 Holds not one drop in all its depths for me.
 The liquid arch of dawn, the plangent seas

That foam with all the stars, draw back their waves
 To lonely heights that mock my upraised face
 With thirsts that look to me as I to them.

.

The Source! Can it be true? O may it not be?
 May it not at last await me in that garden
 To which we bleed our way through all this waste?—
 One cup—some little chalice that will hold
 One drop that will not shudder into mist
 Till I have drained it. Can it be?

[He looks up through the broken ceiling.]

The night
 Dreams like a child that waits, and may not I,
 Whose portion seems to be only—the night—
 Share also its untroubled—hope?

*[He stands for a moment so; looking up and
 repeats the word as though speaking to
 some one.]*

—Hope.

CURTAIN

ACT IV

SCENE I. — *One year later. Between midnight and dawn. The top of bluffs on the west bank of the Missouri River. SOLDIERS encamped. Some asleep, some gambling, others talking. In the foreground is CORONADO seated with a young OFFICER who is playing a lute and singing. Back of them is PERTH wrapped in his cloak, pacing slowly up and down and stopping from time to time.*

THE OFFICER. [*Singing.*]

I knew some dream had spelled her by
Her charmèd air.
Would God I might have held her by
Her long, bright hair!
I gave her something like a star,
And she gave me, instead,
Roses, but the roses are
Dead.

CORONADO. No more such songs. Why should all
sounds to-night

Be sad?

A YOUTH. Yet still sing something.

THE SINGER.

Why not this?

[*Singing.*] Tears, the blood of Old Love's ghost —

COR. That speaks no lighter dreaming.

THE YOUTH.

Sing to us

Something that breathes of hearts, yet tells no sadness.

THE SINGER. No mouth has breath in it that could
so sing.

COR. Give us some piece tuned to the summer night,
Warm with the call of memories of kisses.

THE SINGER. Of them I cannot sing, they sing them-
selves,

But of the hour when they are born I will :

[*Singing.*]

What is it calls to me, sweet, sweet,

Out of the night?

Lo, a star comes down with soundless feet

And a sudden light.

It has shown one singing a thing of hope

With a tune of fears.

The words now run to a joy, now grope

To a place of tears.

Whose eyes are these that were made to weep,

But never see?

What voice is this that wafts all sleep

From night and me?

O face of the wild, wild brow!

O wings of the weary dove!

Come, for I know you now,

Love!

THE YOUTH. [*Rising and coming forward.*]

Yet it is sad; but ah, once on a night —

COR. Leave off and think no more on things unreal,

Think of the morrow's sun, what it will bring.

THE SINGER. The sun has sometimes failed.

COR.

But not to-morrow's!

The guides have sworn by cross and book and flame,

That they speak truth.

THE YOUTH. And I believe.

THE SINGER. I doubt.

COR. Good ensign, you came first; did you see nothing?

THE YOUTH. Night had already fallen, I could see

Only that some great valley lies below us,

Whose depths seemed fathomless to me and yet —

COR. [*Breathlessly.*] And — What?

THE YOUTH. I seemed to hear the sigh of water

Lifting its restless bosom from some bed —

[*PERTH has paused behind the group and is listening eagerly. CORONADO springs to his feet. They look into each other's eyes, each reading the other's hope or belief.*]

THE SINGER. [*Rising.*] It may —

COR. It must.

PERTH. The River!

COR. Eden itself!

Ho! Rouse all heads at once; so that all eyes

May look and see now what all hearts have longed for.

[*The SINGER seizes a trumpet and blows the awakening call. The men stir and rise sleepily.*]

AN OFFICER. [*Saluting.*] We wait your bidding.

COR. Then no longer wait.

The topmost hour of each of your high fortunes

Looms on your sight. Go, and prepare for life!

And I, myself, will furnish my commands.

Leave not one hope undreamed!

[*Exeunt CORONADO and OFFICER in opposite directions.*]

A SOLDIER. [*Stumbling to his feet.*] Blast me all trumpets!

2D SOLD. We're waked before we sleep.

3D SOLD. Why were we waked?

4TH SOLD. How long till dawn?

1ST SOLD. A quartern hour.

3D SOLD. What think you,
Does Paradise await us with the day?

2D SOLD. It lies spread out below like a great feast,
Which Day will serve us.

3D SOLD. What shall we first gather
At this good banquet?

2D SOLD. Gold.

1ST SOLD. What next?

4TH SOLD. Aye Gold!

3D SOLD. For me a plenished paunch.

2D SOLD. If there be maidens —

1ST SOLD. Ah!

Enter CORONADO.

COR. Form and march to break the night's
encampment,
Then wait until I come to lead from night
To day!

[*Exeunt SOLDIERS. CORONADO then turns to
PERTH who has continued to stand motion-
less.*]

And still you stand as though unhearing.

PERTH. And yet I hear.

COR. You peer into the air
As one long blind.

PERTH. And yet I see.

COR. [*Turning from him.*] The moments
Seem without end or even a beginning.

PERTH. 'Tis now the last deep shudder of the dark
Before it dies.

COR. And to us dies forever !
We will stand here, we two, till this last shadow
That thwarts our souls from hope shall pass from
earth.

You who have saved me for this hour shall share it.
Together we will see what mortal eyes
Have seen not since they first gave birth to tears.

PERTH. Upon the entrance pathway there was one
Placed with a flaming sword turned every way,
Yet we have passed through flame.

COR. And mist.

PERTH. And darkness.

COR. There ! Was that not an arrow of light that rose
Above the garden ?

PERTH. 'Twas a star that fell.
It bodes —

COR. A good ! It was our evil star !
This night it died and now has sunk forever
To cindrous night in the remote horizon !

PERTH. And now, in that far edge, as though a seed
Were sown, there is a hint of budding grey,
A bud not wholly innocent of night,
And yet a colour. Earth may well now wait.

COR. But see, it dies !

PERTH. Yet now it blooms again !
Whiter and with a rumour of hidden trumpets

One lance of dawn heralds a myriad hues
That follow it!

COR. Now they begin to rise!
There are the ghosts of all the pearls that wait
Our gathering!

PERTH. And deep and faint beneath them
Is promise of that reawakened rose
Which quickens in the blood of all whose lips
Are cooled by that deep cup which waits our own.

COR. There are the imaged, passionate hearts of
rubies!

PERTH. And here are gems all quiet with deep azure,
Or the untroubled cool of wakening green!

COR. Silver! And amethyst! O rose-born air!
The colours seem like music or sweet odours!
There's gold! At last — in all these months, the first!
Yonder low cloud is all one piece of it!
All mirroring the bright richness of the dream
Still veiled beneath us. Will we not be blind
When all the sudden glory breaks upon us
Within a few swift breaths?

[PERTH *is standing apart unhearing.* CORO-
NADO *speaks rather to himself than to PERTH.*]

Her eyes alone
Could look upon it, being more glorious.
Her eyes! O have my own been even so briefly
Dazzled to the forgetting of the prize
By the poor means to it!

Enter an OFFICER.

OFFICER. The soldiers beg
To be led down at once into the vale.

COR. No, from these heights they first must look upon it

Lest they go blind and mad on going close
With unaccustomed eyes. Yes, I will lead them
First, here and swiftly for the light draws near.

[*Exeunt* CORONADO and OFFICER.]

PERTH. The stars leave now their mighty cavalcade
Faster and faster, each to its own rest.
They will not see full day nor the day's beauty,
Yet each was faithful to the light it kept;
Holding lone vigil without hope of sight,
Nor aid of touch, across wide space, from others.
No voice, no breath, no word of any sound
Came to one watcher from another one.
And yet each had its light, and having light
It well could be content — and beyond all
Unto them now, for a space, is given rest.
Unto whom else, unto what other thing?

Enter from the opposite side BEATRIX. *After looking intently toward CORONADO retreating, then furtively on all sides, she raises her visor.*

BEATRIX. What do you see that look'st so fixedly?

PERTH. Light!

BEAT. And what more?

PERTH. Colours!

BEAT. But what beside?

PERTH. Day stirs but faintly as yet beneath the dawn,
I cannot see what dream it will uncover.

BEAT. To me it seems all mist.

PERTH. Do you see nothing?

BEAT. Nothing with open eyes.

PERTH. Then with eyes closed?

BEAT. Behind shut lids they seem at last to see
Forelightnings of some long-impending storm.

PERTH. But storms banish all colours from the sky —

BEAT. Yet leave it white.

PERTH. But life is never so.

BEAT. It is the hue of Peace.

PERTH. Once in the west

You pointed to this hour and bade me see,
And sight has come to me — but you? For you
Where is hope fled?

[BEATRIX moved at last to tell him her secret.

BEAT. It has come even more near:

This day my vows will end and be fulfilled.

PERTH. Fulfilled!

BEAT. At last, what sudden thing has thrilled
Your eyes into a gaze that seems like blindness?

PERTH. [*With the hesitation of a mighty hope.*] To
end a vow is to be freed from it.

BEAT. [*Ingenuously.*] And I am free from all past
vows, but ever

New bonds are being woven that enmesh me
Most willing prisoner.

PERTH. O say you so,
Seeing the fountain has not yet appeared?

BEAT. Why, how could such a bubble weigh or lighten
My dear captivity?

PERTH. But crushing time
Lifts from my body yet not one dead hour.

BEAT. Ah, yes, I had forgotten even the things

That others seek, in dreaming on the one
Which is my own desire. Yes, for you, water —

PERTH. [*Still blindly mistaking her.*] And you — you
search —

BEAT. For what, I pray, has thirst.
For I bear with me that which may give solace.

PERTH. [*Unsteadily.*] You have told this to me —
your lips have framed it?

BEAT. [*Gratefully.*] Why should I not — O you,
without whose aid

There would be now no framing and no lips?

PERTH. [*Stricken with infinite joy.*] Not now. [*He
turns half from her with an effort.*] Look not into
my face lest terror

Enter you from that awe which lights like fire
My wintry vision — a little longer still
I will withhold, but oh! not for myself,
Only until the other cup that waits me
Shall make me ready.

BEAT. [*Listless and wholly uncomprehending. With her
face to the east.*] Ah, the sweet, near wind!
[*She turns again to him.*]

I cannot fathom what your words may mean;
But you will find, and soon, no doubt, the end
Of all your yearning.

PERTH. It is ended now.
There is no yearning beyond this perfect hour.

BEAT. I do not know, the garden still is veiled.
Yet you do well to hope.

PERTH. A few breaths more
And we shall both meet all hopes face to face —

BEAT. And so possess them —

PERTH. All.

BEAT. Or none.

[*The noise of returning troops is heard.*]

PERTH. The men!

[*BEATRIX hastily lowers her visor. Enter*

CORONADO leading the SOLDIERS. BEATRIX passes among them and is lost to view.

CORONADO. [*To SOLDIERS.*] Halt there! First of all mortal things my eyes

And mine alone shall be immortal! Then

You too may look.

[*The SOLDIERS remain on the side of the slope.*

CORONADO mounts to the rock on which PERTH stands near the edge of the bluff and a few feet higher than the SOLDIERS' position.]

[*To PERTH.*] Has any cloud unfolded?

PERTH. 'Tis lighter.

COR. Yes, the garment of dead night,
Hiding the bosom of unknown desire,
Wavers at last!

PERTH. And lifts!

COR. And there afar
Towers to meet the dome of beckoning day!

AN OFFICER. What can you see?

PERTH. As yet only bright mist
Dragging its radiant length along the east.

COR. Now —

PERTH. Shadows again.

COR. But there a tendril lifts

Higher and, with a message of white hopes,
Floats toward the coming sun !

PERTH. And there a wave
Spires to that last slow-dying star!

COR. And now
With sleep and all old dreams and visions dead,
Day takes all heaven's citadels!

PERTH. Not yet.
Still that dark robe upon the waiting Eden
Clings like a shroud.

COR. Hope and the fruit of hope
Are one in this great hour ; joy needs no seizing,
'Tis ours already and the dream of it
Is its own end — Ah !

A VOICE [*from the SOLDIERS.*] What thing now is shown?

PERTH. The veil seems slowly to withdraw.

COR. I see it!

A VOICE. What?

COR. [To PERTH.] Look—far down!

PERTH. The mist seems coloured there.

COR. It glows! It is no mist! Can you not see
The gem which is the mother of all dawn?

PERTH. There is some gleam.

COR. It waits one moment yet
Before it thunders upon our blinded sight !

[*TWO SOLDIERS.*] Choose what you will, O you whose blood has bought it!

Out of all that which waits our famished eyes !
Bright, barren sands of gold, which shall be fertile.
Jewels that welter like great fallen suns !
The living heat that smoulders in deep rubies,

The endless April of cool emeralds
 And chrysoprase within whose heart the sky
 Kisses the sea! The sullen mystery
 Of opals holding captive sunsets past!
 And diamonds fashioned from the frozen souls
 Of lilies once alive! All — all are yours!

[*The SOLDIERS have been murmuring with impatience ever since their last entrance. Their discontent at being held back now grows mutinous.*

A SOLDIER. [*Starting toward PERTH and CORONADO.*]
 I will not wait.

2D SOLD. [*Following him.*] Nor I.

3D SOLD. [*Going.*] Here's for a sight!

[*All the SOLDIERS start, the OFFICERS trying to hold them back.*

COR. [*Seeing them.*] Yes, come! It is not just to starve your eyes

Even while my own are first fed and made strong.

[*The SOLDIERS reach the ledge and peer down. There is a pause.*

1ST SOLD. [*Wonderingly.*] But where?

[*During the last speeches of CORONADO his face has been averted from the valley and turned toward the SOLDIERS. While he was speaking the final flush of dawn lightened the whole scene. It now shows the valley which appears even unusually grey and desolate in the early morning light. In the distance flows the great muddy river. PERTH, who*

has seen all, has throughout heard nothing, but has remained with his eyes on the plain below as though stricken to stone.

2D SOLD. What jewels?

3D SOLD. Is there anything?

4TH SOLD. I can see nothing.

5TH SOLD. All the mist is gone.

And I have eyes ; it needs more skill to trick them.

2D SOLD. A trap!

1ST SOLD. A foul deceit!

4TH SOLD. Once more his lies

Have bled us.

3D SOLD. O the fool — the hollow fool

I was to be so lured by such a mouth !

PERTH. Hold ! Are you so alone in suffering ?

If you so think, look upon him. [*He points to CORONADO whose eyes are set on the scene of the final destruction of his hopes.*]

2D SOLD. [*Moved to some pity at the sight.*] Yes, truly.

PERTH. He, too, has been misled no less than we.

1ST SOLD. Yet, O what words he spoke !

4TH SOLD. With what clouds lured us!

PERTH. And yet himself as well.

3^D SOLD. But, O the blood,

The thorns and flints upon the way !

2D SOLD. And hunger!

PERTH. [*To an OFFICER.*] Go, lead them back again
into the camp

Until we plan for new immediate needs.

OFFICER. [*To SOLDIERS.*] About — and march to tents. No further words.

[*The mutinous threats and dissent are hushed to murmurs. Exeunt all save PERTH and CORONADO.*]

COR. No further sky than this — [*He takes a few sudden steps that bring him to the edge of the precipice.*]

PERTH. [*Reaching and grasping him.*] What would you do?

COR. No hour for breath — only to go — to go!

PERTH. Where?

COR. Where else but beyond the sight of it?

PERTH. Of what?

COR. The bane called Living! The foul lie
With which the curse called time lures me more slowly
To each hour's death!

PERTH. [*After a pause.*] I, too, have looked on life.

COR. Then we will go together, being at last
Made wise.

PERTH. [*Steadily.*] And thus far I have seen few
things

Undimmed of tears, yet surely there still waits
Some hour emptied of grief for each of us.

COR. I have already sought it overlong.

PERTH. O yet an instant, see, upon the plain
Hope whitens again into a shape for us!

COR. [*Looking with him.*] What is it?

PERTH. From this place it seems a pool!

COR. I have seen many such.

PERTH. But see! The sun
Rains its pure earliest fire upon the waves,
As though to make more plain the end we seek!

COR. I see — and I have seen — too much.

PERTH. I dream
That this bright image of awakening
May be at last the Water of all Dreams!

COR. Ah, that poor phantom Source! I never sought it.
I have found the thing called Youth too deadly bitter
To grasp at further tasting.

PERTH. But men say
The earth upon its banks is essence of gold!

COR. Men say —

PERTH. If it prove gold will you not live?

COR. Men say —

PERTH. Bide here, I will descend the rock
And seize and bring back Life with eager hands,
Life for your own hands and your yearning lips
And for your eyes. Sands I will bring to you,
Whose tawny grains outglow the water itself!
Stand, and with eyes held fast upon the pool
Know that with my return all griefs are ended!

[He starts to descend at a place where the declivity is less steep, and is slowly lost to view. CORONADO stands seemingly neither hearing nor seeing for a time. Then suddenly seems to waken.]

COR. Thus far — and then — an end — and this —
at last

The ending. Colours! Mist! The blank of sky!
Nothing beyond — nothing behind the colours!
The sky thwarts all. There is no need to strive
Further to look on mist of other shapes.
Each hour the mocking barrier grows more dense;
So to break through —

[*He begins to lift himself to a rock that projects over the gulf.*]

And baffle it at last.

So to break through —

[*He is poising for the leap when, from behind a near rock, BEATRIX rushes forward and drags him a few steps backward. Her face is still masked by the steel.*]

What thing is this that clutches?

One of the race of men! Why, so am I!

Poor race — but being of it you shall follow —

I lead!

[*He grasps and tries to draw her with him to the edge. She struggles powerfully to hold him back.*]

But what! So strong! And will not come!

Then with all strength and will lying cold, you shall!

[*He swiftly draws his sword and dashes toward her. She avoids his first stroke, but he pushes her so fiercely that she is brought to the very edge of the precipice. As he is about to force her over, she lifts in desperation the visor. His sword drops from his hand. He gazes at her as one in deep sleep. He passes his hand across his face as though to dispel a vision, then again looks and after a pause he speaks.*]

O Pale! Whiter than ever in the night!

Never the moon nor any drifting star

Brought you so hallowed and white, yet real to me.

— Why did no daytime dawn or noon before
Bring you? For oh, the day brought many dreams!

BEAT. Am I so faintly seen as dreams?

COR. You speak!

BEAT. And have I not been given lips for speech?

Or shall they be forever hushed, laid softly

Upon your own?

COR. Even the braver voice!

And not like that which wailed out of the dark

For comforting!

BEAT. I have not sought for comfort;

Only to aid you.

COR. O speak, breathe and tell

While I may see and hear! You soon will pass

And the frail web of you rejoin the air

And I be left.

BEAT. Yes, I will pass, and briefly.

Therefore, O Love, shall we not cling, this moment?

Strike it like fire from out the dark of time,

That when time glooms again we may remember?

[He starts instinctively toward her, but after a few steps he pauses.]

COR. No, I will no more strive to anything

And so dispel it.

BEAT. Then, if not yet vanished,

I, the last phantom, must dissolve myself,

For we'll endure no wraiths. If sense of sight

Nor hearing lifts the veil from off your soul —

Then may — some touch —

[She lifts her helmet from her head and casts it upon the ground, letting her hair fall]

about her. She goes slowly to him. She reaches to him. His eyes yearn to her, but he shrinks back waiting to see her vanish.

COR. May not one thing of all
Remain?

BEAT. Yes — *[She kisses him.]*

COR. O God, if another hour
Than this awaits me, let it hold no longer,
But let the perishing dream draw forth my breath!

BEAT. Am I still no more real than visionings?
Ah, will not even your blood awake your soul?
Have the snow-textured arms of dreams these pulses?
Has the pale spirit of sleep a mouth like this?

COR. You do not fade into cold, futile mist?

BEAT. Ah no, and yet what better time to pass
Than standing so; unknown, ungreeted, feared
By those same eyes to which my own have lifted
Through circling months of shifting frost and fire;
So weary long; so many desolate leagues?

[He touches her face.]

COR. O — I believe — witness, dear God — my faith
That this, of truth, — is she — in very flesh!
And for my mighty faith take her not from me.

BEAT. Francis —

COR. O deathless Bice! Here in Eden,
As once the dark song-mouth of lighted gloom
Greeted you, so even I!

BEAT. Yet even now
You would have fled from Eden, seeing none.

COR. For you were not within it.

BEAT. Yes, of truth,

I was not in these arms, for they are Eden.

COR. Within your breast, the Land of Sorrow's End,
Is all my Paradise.

BEAT. Beyond the sky

You would have hurled yourself had I not clasped you.

COR. Your eyes are now my sky and all beyond them
Are the great deeps of you : so if I pass
These lucent boundaries I seek no more
Than you — than you.

BEAT. And now, shall I die swiftly,
Or with joy lingering ?

COR. O Sweet !

BEAT. Your vow
To slay me if I followed !

COR. Look no more
After us but before. There is no death
For us in anything — in any world.

BEAT. Yet part of me is dead : my griefs. This hour
Is the dear shroud in which they have been laid ;
To all my sighs your lips give burial ;
Your eyes are the last grave of all my tears.

COR. O breathe no more of things now dead, but cling
And let the music of the touch of you
Enfold me with all singing, living things.

BEAT. I am stirred to call unto the whole glad earth :
“ Behold, this hour your gladness taken from you ! ”

For it is ours ! Shall we not always be
Here in the world of morning and bright dew ?

COR. We have known no hour but this, nor ever shall.

BEAT. Forever to stand thus with dawn-blown hair !

COR. And count the years by new caresses learned !

BEAT. Always to conquer Time with one last kiss !

COR. A dimness seems to close upon your face !

BEAT. The way was long—so long—I have wandered
far.

COR. O Heavy Eyes, forgive Love's heedless heart ;

Unthinking Love that knows no weariness ;

Wild Love, barren of tender services !

How shall I make you rest upon these rocks ?

BEAT. Take no more care for anything save Love.

[She turns to the direction from which she entered.]

[Calling.] Felisa ! Juana !

Enter her two Indian WOMEN.

Even upon these stones

The bending sisterhood of women flowers.

They guard me carefully.

COR. Rest then, Tired Heart,

Below, veiling your face again awhile

Until the women shield you from all men's eyes.

[He helps her to don the head-piece.]

BEAT. You come ?

I follow soon with Life — to Life !

*[Exeunt BEATRIX and WOMEN. CORONADO
turns his eyes to the east.]*

COR. O sky that has been tender unto her

Let me be nearer to your softnesses !

*[He runs to the rock from which he was
formerly about to spring. As he stands*

triumphantly upon it PERTH appears above the edge climbing slowly with his eyes fixed agonizedly upon CORONADO. As he comes, he speaks.

PERTH. Yet you have youth and morning and bright
air

Which are the foods of Hope; all these are yours!
Will you not stay for them?

COR. [*Dreamily stretching out his hand to the east.*]

Broad, gentle sky!

PERTH. An instant still, stand fast! I have one word,
At last — a name to breathe into your soul!

COR. [*Turning and seeing him for the first time.*]

Why are your eyes so blanched, your words so breath-
less?

PERTH. Draw back one pace, one moment till I speak!

COR. Ah, I remember now. You went to seek —

And found? [*He reads PERTH's eyes.*] Nothing. And

I — it came to me!

PERTH. What came?

COR. The sky! The sun! The mighty morning!

All things that I possessed before yet knew not.

PERTH. And you will live?

COR. Is there another thing

Than life?

PERTH. What new-fledged day is this within you

That makes your every breath rise with mad wings?

Have you found gold?

COR. Yes, gold more dear

Than the good earth or the sky's gilded blue,

Or sea-caves carven of peace have ever yielded!

PERTH. Where?

COR. It is stored here. [*He points to his breast.*]

Here, beyond all sight

Save mine!

PERTH. And so at last you know —

COR. Know? What?

PERTH. The gold that thrills within your veins, the treasure

Unstolen by the furtive creeping years.

COR. That youth of which you dream? Yes, I possess it.

PERTH. But I did not find it there upon the plain,
Neither the golden earth.

COR. Then turn with me
From dreams and fix your wakened eyes on day!

[*The murmur of angry voices has been heard and grows louder and louder. Enter running, the SOLDIERS, mutinous, the OFFICERS in front of them trying to hold them back.*]

AN OFFICER. [*To CORONADO.*] The men, being mad
with desperate bafflement —

I cannot hold them back—beg that you turn
And pierce no more into the unknown east,
But only home.

COR. And all their prayers are granted.

No more the dawns, but only sunset colours

Shall light our faces; yet, O, in our hearts

We bring back morning. On this day we start!

This hour! At once! [*To PERTH.*] Good soldier,
you will go

Forward as a messenger to find a path.
At Tiquex, join Ubeda and then — on!
Take ten men with you. Ho, for ten to go!

[*Ten SOLDIERS step forward.*]

You have them.

PERTH. But to-day —

COR. Stay not one hour!

PERTH. Until the night —

AN OFFICER. If he will not, then I.

COR. [*To PERTH.*] Will you now fail, who have been
so long to me

My only trusted heart and strength?

PERTH. I go.

COR. Good! Let the following quarter of this hour

Look on some path already hewn for us

By that good sword worn by my braver part,

My friend. Farewell. Why do your eyes turn back-
ward?

PERTH. Only to look again —

COR. On what?

PERTH. The Dawn.

CURTAIN

ACT V

SCENE I. — *Three months later. The summit of T'aaai-yalana, or Thunder Mountain, three miles southeast from Zuñi, in northern New Mexico. It is a great mesa of rock rising in sheer walls a thousand feet above the desert. It is only accessible on the northeastern side, where there is a narrow and tortuous trail.*

Up stage the view is partly thwarted by the wall of an old ruin, built of unhewn stones. Past it, in the background, not far distant, is seen the brink of the precipice, and beyond that a hundred miles of the plain. Over all is the yellow molten light of the sun that has laid it waste.—In front of the wall and sitting against it is a SOLDIER. His head hangs weakly forward and he clutches an empty water-bottle to his breast. Enter another SOLDIER who appears to be in the same enfeebled condition. He totters across the stage muttering to himself and finally espies the other. He glares for an instant at him, then hurls himself upon him and wrests the bottle away. He puts it to his mouth and turns it upside down, squeezing and pressing it, the other, meanwhile, making feeble efforts to rise.

SOLDIER. [*Finally taking the bottle from his mouth.*]

Dry!

2D SOLD. [*Weakly reaching for it.*] Give it back.

1ST SOLD. All gone! Do you hear? There's nothing left.

2D SOLD. [*Still more feebly.*] Give it back.

[*The first SOLDIER gives it to him slowly, intently watching him meanwhile, to see if the other has means of extracting anything from it, but he only clasps it again eagerly to his breast.*]

1ST SOLD. [*Suddenly half turning and putting his hand to his head.*] O the sun! O Christ! They've pulled off the eyelid of the sun and it can't close its eye! It stares and stares, dripping blood, and it bores deep down into my head! The cinders fall into my mouth and choke me! [*He falls on his knees beside the other.*] What do you think the sun's made of? [*He waits, but the other seems not to hear.*] Fire? [*The other does not raise his head.*] [*Musingly.*] No, not fire, for whenever it set in the sea, 'twould make it boil up over the land and then everything could drink. Drink! Do you hear? We could drink! We, here in hell, a thousand leagues away from the sea! The cold green would come to us softly, softly lapping, lapping,—till it comes so near it can't get away again and then we will churn into its soft, smooth breast, like a stab wound, for not coming sooner to us, and then we will sink down and down and it will struggle and try to fade, as it did this morning, in the air, but it can't throttle us! It can't throttle us! Not till we've sucked it dry and got it in our blood and then we'll let go and then the blood will float, float far down and away with the other waves, but cooled, cooled, cooled. — See there! — Now 'tis gone

— look away — the sea's gone ! All gone ! Only a few fish left stranded on a rock up near the sun.

Poor fish, poor fish !

2D SOLD. [*Stirring, as in dream.*] The sea !

1ST SOLD. The sea is brine, we could never drink salt water. 'T has blood in't.

2D SOLD. Water !

1ST SOLD. I've had good drinks in my time. Long, cool pulls at many and many a flask. I've seen whole skies of milk ; but too high, too high ! No way to reach them but to climb rocks, always getting a little nearer the sun, and then it sets and the west looks like blood, but no, it's wine, red wine, with snow in't to drink ! Aye, that's the word : drink and drink and suck up.

2D SOLD. [*In delirium.*] Little Blandina —

1ST SOLD. O the sun ! It's falling ! It gets nearer and nearer ! We climbed to it and now it's coming to meet us. The sun can't abide any wings save his own. He scorches all who fly at him. [*His eyes again fall on the bottle which the other holds. He again takes it. The prostrate figure makes no further resistance.*] Yet this bottle had water in't once. Change, change, all things must come to it. Once it was wet, now it is dry, — dry as my tongue — my tongue is part of the leathern bottle. [*He rubs it against his mouth, then suddenly starts to his feet, wildly.*] Ha, I know now ! The bottle is damned ! It held blood ! The Fiend made it out of the tongues of men turned to leather for want of water. [*He dashes it from him.*]

2D SOLD. Water —

Enter from behind the wall PERTH and UBEDA. Both are haggard and emaciated, but PERTH in a much greater degree than the FRIAR. The SOLDIERS stagger mechanically and weakly to their feet and salute, leaning against the wall. UBEDA motions them to depart. Exeunt SOLDIERS. — PERTH totters in his walk and leans heavily upon UBEDA, whose arm steadies him.

PERTH. And on its banks grow flowers of all past Springs ;

The fadeless presences of blossoms dead,
And among these I'll kneel, being, like them,
A memory. They, with soft-petaled breath,
Will keep me company until I drink, —
Until I drink — and then — what then ? Ah yes,
Youth will return. And she — her face will seem
To lean with mine from out the water's depths —
Close, touching mine, cooled by her hair, so mirrored
From out the burnished surface of the pool,
And then — then I will turn, being young, and she
Who has shown me all things else desirable
In waking worlds or dreams, will show me — peace.
UBEDA. O God, let him not wake !

PERTH. And day by day
Peace and her shadowing hair, and night by night
Rest and her eyes to illumine all the shadows.

Enter a SOLDIER followed by an Indian RUNNER, who leans exhausted against the wall. The SOLDIER steps forward at attention.

UBEDA. [*To SOLDIER.*] Tell on.

SOLDIER. Those who were sent to bring up water —

UBEDA. They put to death?

SOLD. No, but with arrows and stones

They broke the pots and sent the bearers to us
With empty hands and swollen tongues like ours.

PERTH. What news was told us then?

UBEDA. The siege still holds.

PERTH. What day is this?

UBEDA. The fifth without water,
The thirtieth since we paused to wait Don Francis.

PERTH. Then we will journey southward once again.

No doubt some other path has led them home.

They will not find us here, there is no need

To linger. We will go.

UBEDA. Yes, we will go,

And soon, but in no flesh of mortal texture.

PERTH. [*Suddenly lifting his head and gazing into*

UBEDA'S face with the momentary divination of fear.]

Ha, you have fear! Of what — in all the world?

Has't form, or is it bodiless? — what thing

In all this world is left for us to fear?

UBEDA. It has the form of wild, blood-coloured men

Gathered from every corner of the desert

About the steep foundations of this rock

To wait the end.

PERTH. Then, now is the beginning.

[*To SOLDIER.*] Summon the men.

[*Exit SOLDIER.*]

UBEDA. What would you do?

PERTH. At last

We turn upon the course that leads our feet

Where all our lives, our lips alone have wandered.

UBEDA. You will descend?

PERTH. Yes, while there is a tongue
To say "I will."

UBEDA. Then 'twill not be for long;
Our feebled blood will hardly stain the sand
Before the hearts that give it cease from leaping,
If we give battle now!

PERTH. [*Looking at him with great and questioning wonder.*] Yet you are brave.

How can it be you plead so timorously?
You, whose breast is hearted like a lion,
To play this rosary and cassock part!
Are there not winds enough up here in heaven
To blow the smoke of altars from your eyes?

[*The SOLDIERS, nine of them, file in slowly and weakly take their stand waveringly at attention.*]

Here, look on men and know yourself for one.
Men! We are more! Ha, rather are we gods!
No mortal could endure this infinite height!
Our feet alone touch earth, our heads are shrouded
Here in this firmament of upper fire
Beyond men's sight! What aspirant sun is this
Crept in our sky as though 'twould mount to us?
Let us brook never an orb but our own eyes!
Is there a soul here fears thus to become
A shatterer of this blind, sneering roof
That bent so long above us? Stand more bravely,
And let not this one moan and that one sink!
Will not the strength that raised us here avail

Against the poor dust-motes that haunt the base
Of this long-kindled pyre?

*[A slight noise and commotion back of the line
of SOLDIERS is heard, and a native Zuñi
RUNNER enters and staggers and falls
breathless among them, holding up a letter.]*

AN OFFICER. *[Following the RUNNER.]* A messenger.

PERTH. From whom?

OFF. The native runners to the Viceroy.

PERTH. Break the seal and read.

OFF. *[Opening the letter and reading.]*

— The Viceroy, having learned —

That all the promises have come to naught,—

That all the dreams of Eden fade to ashes —

That all the rumours of gold have turned to clay,—

That all the end of hoping is disaster,—

That all those lies and all the prayers which caused —

The outlay that impoverished Mexico,—

Have wrought not one return, — gives these commands:

— The leader, Coronado, shall return —

Stript of his honour till he can account —

Unto his sovereign for his great failure.—

The other officers and common rank —

Will also come. —

A SOLDIER. Huzza !

OFF. *[Continuing to read.]* But in disgrace.

SOLD. Ah !

2D SOLD. What is that ?

3D SOLD. Disgrace ?

4TH SOLD. Some penalty.

2D SOLD. And does it scorch men?

1ST SOLD. No.

4TH SOLD. Nor dry their mouths?

3D SOLD. No.

2D SOLD. Then who cares, so we go back again?

OFF. Hold, there is more! [*Reading.*]

— All men once prisoners —

Held by the Crown shall, on receipt of this —

Take warning never to return to us. —

Let them remain where this command shall find them.

[*PERTH reels and sinks to a sitting posture on a stone behind him. The PRIEST bends over him.*]

1ST SOLD. Well, as for that, those who must heed it, may;

For never a cage held me but dinted armour.

THE OTHER SOLD. Nor me! Nor me!

PERTH. [*Rising slowly with UBEDA's assistance.*]

Is there no man among you

Who has been imprisoned?

[*He waits. The SOLDIERS look questioningly, each mutely denying captivity.*]

None? Then you will go.

Let each man say farewell to me, and then —

[*UBEDA sees that he is on the point of letting the SOLDIERS know of his incarceration and interrupts.*]

UBEDA. O peace! Why should the silence now be broken?

1ST SOLD. [*Half comprehending PERTH's meaning.*]

What! He would stay?

2D SOLD. And why?

UBEDA. He will not stay.

See, they are true to you ; their rugged spirits

Are knit to you with never-wavering faith.

A SOLD. Where would we go without his heart and sword?

2D SOLD. Not far alive, that's certain.

3D SOLD. No, nor dead.

PERTH. You still would follow me?

ALL. Who else? Who else?

PERTH. Then while life bides with us you shall be led

And led to gaze on very Life itself!

Gaze on it? Yes, and drink it until Eden

Is echoed to your eyes from each cup's depth !

You choose well who thus choose to be immortal.

The calm has lifted. Gird yourselves at once

With outward and inner steel. We start this hour

To intercept Don Coronado's legion.

OFF. Where?

PERTH. South of that same path that led us here

Ere they return.

A SOLD. [*Ominously sullen.*] That's only south of east?

PERTH. Yes.

2D SOLD. [*Openly rebellious.*] We have done with
east.

3D SOLD. No east for me.

4TH SOLD. We did not fight our way thus far toward home

To be coaxed back again to watch the sunrise.

OFF. Forgive them.

ALL. Anywhere but back again!

PERTH. Forgive! I cherish in my heart no blame
Toward you. Neither blame nor faint surprise.
All are brave men, but merely blind or deaf
To what a prize awaits. I — I alone
Know, and so alone I must go and win it.
Farewell.

OFF. Must it be so?

UBEDA. [*To OFFICER.*] Let all withdraw.

[*Exeunt SOLDIERS.*]

PERTH. And between you and me, then, 'tis farewell.

UBEDA. What would you do?

PERTH. Clutch at the one last hope,
The hope to reach her ere the march has passed
Across the boundaries that would bar my soul
From — what? Either heaven or hell. And, O I shall —
I shall reach to her from the depth of doom,
Stretch out my hands toward the one dim spark
Of yielding in her eyes until it warms
Into a sun that shall go choiring, choiring
Through all her being's utmost deeps, the hymn
That rapt all space with morning! Well I know
That on both sides of this new path to her,
Death stands, lynx-eyed for any wavering steps,
But 'tis a futile watching; in the end,
I, whom she waits, shall find her once again.

UBEDA. And then?

PERTH. Ah, then! When that great dawn of her
Shall wash against my vision with the tide
Of its full joy —

UBEDA. Then?

PERTH. 'Tis enough ; what more ?
What mightier hour could Time withhold from me ?

UBEDA. But afterward ?

PERTH. Ah, she will go with me
Home !

UBEDA. And what home ?

PERTH. Is this not solid earth ?
Will not this land bear two upon its breast,
Though they are charged with earth's whole weight of
joy ?

Here shall we bide, for 'twill be home for us !
Far in the East a land of cooler lights
Dreams between Spring and Spring beneath no touch
Save rain and leaves or snow and falling flowers,
Yet it is this same land ; lo, half the world
Has lain here till this hour, stainless, asleep,
And up from the old, blood-choked, semi-orb
That mothered us, shall come the wandering tread
Of those who seek for home, — here they shall find it !
All the old grief that utters yet no sound
Through all the hours of all the throne-galled night,
Shall here find clarion ; the sound of tears
Falling, and innocent blood far bitterer
Shall here be quenched ; here shall no sound nor sight
Be born of all those phantoms in that dream ;
Monarchs in rotten purple, leprous crowns,
Wounds without cause and unjust bonds and prison !
Aye, those ! The hopeless gnawing steel and stone,
More heavy than a myriad bodily deaths !
Here they shall die and pass from earth and fade.
This is the garden we shall walk within.

She, whose calm eyes would have been brave enough
 To live through all the deserts of the world,
 Will here have flowers, and I will have no less
 The perfect bloom —

[*Faint cries and shouting are heard.*]

What sudden sound of joy
 Floats to my ears? Has earth been listening
 To hear of happiness?

[*More voices raised in faint cheers are heard,
 together with the sound of armed men run-
 ning. Enter, running weakly, a SOLDIER.
 He is too exhausted and excited to speak at
 first.*]

UBEDA. [*To the SOLDIER.*] What news have you?

SOLD. [*Deliriously joyous.*] O Blessed James! Patron
 of Thirsty Lips,
 My vows shall be fulfilled!

UBEDA. Peace! Peace! The news?
 [*Enter another SOLDIER followed by several, all
 running unsteadily.*]

2D SOLD. Huzza!

3D SOLD. [*A boy.*] Home! Home!

UBEDA. [*Making nothing of their words.*] Speak!

4TH SOLD. [*Suddenly raising his hand.*] Listen!
 There speaks Life!

[*All listen while from the distance comes the
 faint sound of trumpets.*]

5TH SOLD. [*Who has just staggered in.*] And I have
 seen it from the eastern edge!

UBEDA. Don Francis!

PERTH. She!

5TH SOLD. They now ascend the slope!
All of the troops, Don Francis leading them!

PERTH. [*Tottering toward the wall.*] I go to meet her.
 [*He goes a few paces and begins to sink. The*
 PRIEST *reaches him and supports him.*

UBEDA. Wait! She comes to you!
[*To SOLDIERS.*] Go, gird, and let us welcome them, all
 standing.

 [*Exeunt SOLDIERS.*

PERTH. [*With a great sweetness dawning in his face.*]
And so this is the hour on which it falls;
This hour on and no other! Strange! The sky
Bends its vast azure bell above me yet,
Silently, as before! But O, it waits!
It waits the infinite moment that is pending,
When, with her eyes half-veiled with dreams fulfilled,
But with their light laid on the eyes of me,
And with her mouth a little tremulous
From all the troubled violets in her veins, —
And with her hair, and with her lips and brow
All radiant with the mystery of her —
— She shall appear! Then! Then! A little while,
The hundredth of a moment shall we pause—
To look—each standing dumb and motionless
Until, from out her tender holy deeps
Shall rise that aureate starlight in her eyes,
For which I seek—at last, not vainly. Then! —
The same mute, brazen heaven shall reel and sway,
Sound and give forth a note of such mad joy,
That all the yearning choirs throughout the abyss
Shall dream upon their shadowy battlements,

Voiceless among their unstirred instruments,
Listening —

[*The loud blast of a trumpet is heard just beyond the wall. Enter PERTH'S SOLDIERS in full armour. They form.*]

Ah! [*He grows strangely apprehensive.*] What?

UBEDA. [*Soothingly.*] 'Tis the general herald.

[*The clamour and tramp of many people marching is heard and grows steadily nearer. The trumpets continue to sound. Finally enter a HERALD, still trumpeting. He advances formally until he is in the center of the stage. Several PRIESTS follow him closely, blessing PERTH'S SOLDIERS. One of them bears in his hands a large white cross. Beside him is a STANDARD-BEARER carrying a banner wrought with the arms of Spain.*]

THE HERALD. [*Proclaiming.*] Way for the Cross by which we take this rock!

Way for the pennant of His Majesty,
Defender of all realms the Cross protects!
Way for the agent of the Church and State,
The noble and most Catholic General,
The Governor, Don Francis Coronado!

[*The PRIEST elevates the Cross three times. There is an impressive hush and then the HERALD speaks again.*]

Also his Dame, the Doña Beatriz! —

[*PERTH has not seemed to hear the HERALD at first, but at the elevation of the Cross, seemingly moved by some presentiment, he leans*

*to catch the further words of the HERALD.
When the last sentence has been pronounced
he does not at first move, but slowly and
gradually his head falls forward.*

A PRIEST. [*To UBEDA.*] Pax Domini sit semper vobiscum.

UBEDA. And with you, too. [*He turns to PERTH.*]
Would it might be with all!

[The members of the expedition continue to enter. Suddenly a young PRIEST, full of zeal, begins a chant.]

THE YOUNG PRIEST. O Fons Amoris, Spiritu —

[UBEDA hastily touches him and points to PERTH. The rapt expression on the singer's face changes to one of pity.]

Forgive!

[PERTH stands fixed and dumb while others enter. Finally CORONADO himself appears. He is evidently fatigued but clearer-eyed and more cheerful than before. He walks rapidly to PERTH extending his hands with great cordiality.]

COR. O faithful soldier, greeting! All is well!

The blood that threatened you now crusts the desert!

The food you fainted for we bring to you!

Or was it water? We have water, drink!

Drink and be filled, for you have suffered sorely.

Your pain is ended now, and all the wounds

You took upon the way Honour will heal,

And memory will soothe, for you were brave.

You will pass down the path of age in quiet.

For me, I also am content. The gold
 We thought upon proved no more real than thoughts,
 Yet all the treasure of earth or dreams was there,
 And there I found it! And to you who brought her
 Unscathed through all the ravening fire of perils
 To me — for she herself has whispered all —
 For your reward and thanks you shall behold,
 As lawful wife, the maid you did protect.

[Another trumpet is sounded beyond the wall, and the SOLDIERS having formed in ranks, look expectantly toward the sound. There is a stir and the further noise of people approaching. Enter BEATRIX. She is once more attired in feminine garb and is attended by two native WOMEN. As she enters her glance lights and is fixed upon PERTH. As he looks upon her he sways as though to fall. With the more observing sympathy of her sex she notices what has entirely escaped CORONADO.]

BEAT. *[With impulsive pity.]* Ah, do you not see? He
 is faint! Bring water!

Wine and some subtle essence to revive him!
 His face is that of one long famishing!

PERTH. Water and wine I have —

COR. *[To the WOMEN.]* Hasten! He sleeps!
[Exeunt WOMEN.]

PERTH. Bid no dream hasten — all pass — in the end,
 Swiftly —

COR. Some deadly thing has stricken him!

UBEDA. It is but hunger and thirst. Last night I found

That of each day's allotment of the water,
He, daily, has withheld his own poor share
From his own lips — saving to moisten them,
Giving it all — his life — unto the soldiers,
And unto me, unknowing whence it came.

BEAT. O Tender and True! The deed was like his
soul.

Enter her WOMEN with filled flagons and cups.]

[*To them.*] Give me the cup. [*To PERTH.*] Here's
wine and more than wine;

Love! For with returning life comes Love,
And both we bring you with full, grateful hands!

[*PERTH'S eyes are upon her face, but he makes
no effort to accept the cup.*]

COR. He pales as though he bled from inward wounds.

PERTH. [*To BEATRIX.*] I cannot drink — more —
for at last — the cup

Is drained.

BEAT. No, here is life and cooling strength!

COR. [*Coming closer to him.*] Some crushing shadow
rests upon your brow,

Some enemy has wrought some wrong upon you;
Disclose his name that we may aid with vengeance.

PERTH. I know no enemy but Destiny.

BEAT. Grant only now to touch your lips with this.

[*She again extends the cup. PERTH does not
see it, but he is looking at both CORONADO
and BEATRIX as they now stand together be-
fore him. A great light seems to break
over his eyes. When he speaks his voice
has taken a new quietness.*]

PERTH. At last — I see! Always I seemed to know
That one day, — though I know not when — some hour,
I should behold and know it and possess it —
The Font!

COR. No, it is snow and wine!

BEAT. He wanders!

PERTH. I had not thought to find it so at last,
Yet here, and here alone, it has arisen
Within these two — my only youth! Yes — now! —
Upon this hour and place at last! The Source!

[He looks slowly about him.]

It is a barren place — yet flowers are here,
Those which for certain days I seemed to lose;
A desolate, tender fatherhood has here
Found growth and bears, but all too piteously,
A futile bud. And here is that white bloom
Which is the mighty soul of him who loved me.

[He turns to the FRIAR.]

UBEDA, — Friend! O Best and Faithfullest!
Even you grow dim, recede. The folding dusk
Hides one by one the blossoms — but their scents
Remain —

COR. He must be wakened! Force the wine
Between his lips!

UBEDA. He is beyond all force.

PERTH. There have been flowers — I had thought to
love a few

Out of the dream, but now are all dreams dead.
Poor ghosts. Yet once they seemed most real to me,
Memories only now; the eyes that saw them
Briefly between two shadows, now no more

See. Nor will ever see the Garden's colours.
. . . A mist . . a rift within the mist . . and then . .
The mist again and odours far away.
. . The Sea! O wild, wide beach! Am I alone?
The tide grows full and climbs now toward my lips;
I will wait here. The ponderous ancient breast
Heaves heavily its interminable sigh;
Soon it will ebb and leave upon the sands
No shadow of the shell that printed them.
Nor in the thunder of sob or storm or calm,
Or any separate wave's soliloquy,
Will there be memory of what returned;
So with all broken shells . .

BEAT. One stands without
The wall that sense has set about your soul;
Begging to comfort you. O may not I
By touch of hand or token of lips or wine,
Win you again to us? He does not hear me!
PERTH. . . Music . . yet broken . . but 'tis evening
now,
And the day's music is not like the night's . .
Always I listened longingly, in vain,
To hear some voice from either dark or light.
. . Ever before the dial of my hours
Stood Silence with a bitten tongue, forbidding,
And now . . shall I not peer behind the face
Of very Time itself . . spite of all waves?
The sea has much to tell . . some ear must hear . .
Perhaps . . 'tis mine . . but first . . a little sleep . .
. . Perchance . . a little rest . . perchance — chance
[Dies.

BEAT. Help him! He sinks! Lift him!

UBEDA. He is now dead.

COR. O Heavy Fate! To die just when sweet Life
Beckoned again to him.

BEAT. He bore much grief.

CURTAIN

EPILOGUE

Enter SHADOW

SHADOW. Far beyond thought, One broods upon all
this,
Watching the face of many and many a world
Whose yearning clay from time to time He dews
With souls of men from out His infinite will.
And some of all these souls are like the sea,
With patient tides that ever keep their season,
And with their depths fixed in unfailing peace,
But these are few; and some are quiet streams
Winding through placid meadows. Some are pools,
Receiving all and giving naught again,
Saving the pictured changes of the sky . . .
. . . But others are dashed down on horrid flint
That rends them from all life through all their course;
Or if, perchance, at last they win the level,
The unyielding sand swallows their work and them.
. . . He, He who dreams or watches all below,
Waits all, withholding either blow or kiss.
A while he suffers them to pulse or flow,
Then reabsorbs them in those clouds of His.

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